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Michelangelo's Letters

CHARLES SPERONI

In his well-known volume on Italian literature of the sixteenth century (*Il Cinquecento*), Giuseppe Toffanin stated that if Michelangelo had never sculptured a statue, painted a figure, or written a single line of poetry, his *Letters* would have sufficed to give him a place in Italian literature.

Italians were very slow in turning their attention to Michelangelo's letters. A few of them were included at different times in collections of letters of artists of the Renaissance, such as the *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura e architettura scritte da' più celebri professori che in dette arti fiorirono dal secolo XV al XVII* (Rome, 1754-1773) and Giovanni Gaye's *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI* (Florence, 1839-49); some also were included in editions of Michelangelo's poems, such as *Le rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti, pittore, scultore, etc.* (Rome, 1817). It is not until 1858, however, that we come across such a promising title as *Rime e lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti* (Florence, Barbera), but even here we find only a selection of thirty-one letters. It was only in 1875 that the whole body of the artist's extant letters (it is still claimed that somewhere in Florence there are several other unpublished letters) was made available in Gaetano Milanesi's monumental edition, which included also a diary and the artist's contracts: *Le lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti, pubblicate coi ricordi ed i contratti artistici* (Florence, Le Monnier). This edition had been commissioned by the Florentine committee in charge of the festivities in honor of the fourth centenary of Michelangelo's birth. Milanesi was fortunate in that he was able to use not only the already known collection of the artist's letters in the British Museum, but

also the more significant and until then practically inaccessible holdings of the Archivio Buonarroti of Florence.

Milanesi's large volume became very rare and expensive before too many years had passed; however, in 1910, thanks to the foresight and devotion to everything Florentine of Giovanni Papini, an inexpensive edition was published at Lanciano by Carabba. In contrast to Milanesi's edition, which was accompanied by much-needed explanatory notes, Papini's had no notes at all. It reproduced the bare text, with this difference: that whereas Milanesi had grouped the letters chronologically under each correspondent, Papini arranged all 495 letters simply in chronological order (a few errors in the dating of certain letters slipped past Milanesi's sharp eye, and several were made in Papini's purely mechanical arrangement). Since Papini's popular edition several school editions of Michelangelo's letters, usually coupled with the poems, have been published in Italy.

Outside of Italy selections of Michelangelo's letters have also been published through the years: twenty were printed in the original in the appendix of R. Duppa's *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (London, 1806); a few in E. Piot's *Le cabinet de l'amateur* (Paris, 1863) and in the fundamental biography of H. Grimm, *Leben Michelangelos* (Hannover, 1860-63). After Milanesi's edition was published, Karl Frey translated 162 of the artist's letters into German (Berlin, 1907), Boyer d'Agen translated 152 letters into French in his *L'oeuvre littéraire de Michel-Ange* (Paris, 1911), and Marie Dormoy (also into French) all but a few short business letters (Paris, 1926).

As for English, no real edition of Michelangelo's letters has been made to date, but some of them have been translated on a few occasions, especially in connection with biographies of the artist. It is worth noting that as early as 1857 nineteen letters were included in John S. Harford's *Life of Michael Angelo Buonarroti: with a translation of many of his poems and letters* (London), and that some of the letters to his family were published in *The Art Journal* of 1885. In a special class is R. W. Carden's *Michelangelo*:

a Record of His Life as Told in his Letters and Papers (London, 1913), which offers a selection of over two hundred letters.

Michelangelo's letters fall conveniently into two groups: those to his family, and those to "others." The 495 letters can be subdivided as follows: 45 to his father Lodovico; 78 to his brother Buonarroto; 12 to his brother Giovansimone; 206 to his nephew Lionardo, and 154 to "others." We see, then, that the letters to his family far outnumber the others: 341 against 154. This, to a large extent, explains the personal tone of the artist's correspondence. Outside his family, Michelangelo's correspondents are numerous: Pope Clement VII, King Francis I, Duke Cosimo de' Medici, the artists Giorgio Vasari and Sebastiano del Piombo, the poet Vittoria Colonna, his friend Luigi del Riccio, Don Francesco Fattucci priest of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, the handsome young artist Tommaso Cavalieri, representatives of banking firms, and even simple workers such as Maestro Domenico, called Topolino, a stonemason. Especially significant in this group are the letters addressed to Giorgio Vasari, one of the few artists who can be called a true friend of Michelangelo. His first surviving letter, which was written on the 2nd of July, 1496, soon after Michelangelo's arrival in Rome where he had been called by Cardinal di San Giorgio, was not addressed to the artist's family but to Lorenzo of Pier Francesco de' Medici; his last surviving letter is of December 28th, 1563, also from Rome, and was addressed to his nephew Lionardo.

The largest part of the letters were written from Rome, where after all Michelangelo spent most of his life away from Florence, and the last thirty years of his long life; but there are many letters from Florence, while he was working on the Medici chapel and on the plans for the never finished façade of San Lorenzo; from Bologna, where he was casting the large bronze statue of Pope Julius II; from Carrara and Pietrasanta, where he went on various occasions to direct the quarrying of marble; and from a few other places where his travels took him.

There are several breaks in Michelangelo's correspondence which are easily explained: the most significant occurs between 1534 and 1541, when he was completely absorbed in painting the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, which was unveiled on Christmas Day 1541.

In general, the frequency of Michelangelo's correspondence increases as he grows older; between 1542 (after the completion of the Last Judgment) and 1563 Michelangelo wrote more than twice the number of letters he wrote between 1496 and 1542. Most of those written in his old age are addressed to his nephew.

Some of the letters — mainly the ones connected with his work — are long; the majority, however, are rather short. Several are very brief: these are mostly receipts, covering letters, and the like.

In the preface to his edition Papini does not hesitate to state that in some of Michelangelo's letters there is more "force" and "sincerity" than in all of his poems: a statement with which it is easy to find oneself in agreement. I wonder, however, how many readers would agree with him when he states that in every Italian family there ought to be a copy not only of the *Divine Comedy* but also of the poems and letters of Michelangelo.

Force and sincerity are undoubtedly two main characteristics of Michelangelo's letters; but there is another: naturalness. Force, sincerity and naturalness are indeed the characteristics that distinguish most of Michelangelo's letters from the countless others that were written and published by the Italian stylists of the sixteenth century. Letter-writing, which had a long tradition in Italy (was it not one of the main activities of the Humanists, from Petrarch on down, even if they expressed themselves in the nobler Latin rather than in the vulgar tongue?), had reached its height in Michelangelo's time. Montaigne was completely awed by the epistolary activity of Italians in the sixteenth century, and declared that he had acquired over one hundred volumes of Italian letters. But while, as even Montaigne's statement implies, the Italian literati of the Renaissance wrote with an

eye to a vast public of readers — some collections of letters went through several editions within a few years — Michelangelo wrote strictly out of necessity, and was totally unfamiliar with the numerous treatises on letter-writing, the *ars dictandi*, then available to the stylist. We may be sure that if telegraphy — let alone telephony — had been invented by his time, Michelangelo would have left us only a handful of the longer letters. For, whereas the letters of his contemporaries, such as Aretino, Bembo, and even Machiavelli, read almost like essays, some of his own have rather the air of a night-letter.

Michelangelo was usually not concerned with style: he wrote as he spoke, so that most of his letters have an immediacy, a spontaneity that we would seek in vain in other letters of the time. His letters are of the “new-y” sort, and although it is true that some of his contemporaries must on occasion have written similar letters, they were not the kind that would be published and thus transmitted to posterity. Stylists were after effect, polish, the well-rounded phrase, the balanced composition, structurally sound, and linguistically as pure as possible. They were highly conscious of style and language. Michelangelo, who in this instance was the pot of crockery travelling in the midst of pots of iron, was usually not after rhetorical effect: his prose is straightforward and energetic. Michelangelo became conscious of his style only when he was obliged to write to some important person: a Cardinal, Duke Cosimo, the King of France, Vittoria Colonna, and a few others. Then his style becomes ceremonious and cumbersome; the artist is aware of his shortcomings, and while putting his best phrase forward, he admonishes his correspondent that writing is not his profession: “Writing is very grievous to me, for it is not my profession;” “When I write to you, if I should not write as correctly as one should . . . forgive me.” But if Michelangelo’s style lacks polish — as do his poems, for that matter — it is not impersonal like the style of many of the professionals; it is rich in psychological insight. *Le style c’est l’homme*; his letters abound in naturalness

and candor, both in the language and in the feelings expressed.

Haste is another characteristic of Michelangelo. It is evident especially at the beginning and at the end of his letters. He begins with no rhetorical circumlocutions or preambles: he fairly jumps *in medias res*: "I inform you that on Friday Buonarroto arrived here;" "Michele the stonemason came to live with me here;" "I received the contract, and it looks all right to me;" "I have seen the drawings of the rooms painted by Messer Giorgio." The endings are often also abrupt: "I have nothing else to say. The Pope left Rome, and the rumor is that he is coming there;" "Nothing else;" "Pray God that my things come out all right;" "I can't think of anything else, nor do I have time to write;" "I had no more paper;" "I'm well. I hope you are too. Say hello to my friends."

Sometimes the artist is so pressed for time, or so anxious to finish writing and to return to his work, that he forgets to date or even to sign his letters. Other times he wants to date them, but cannot remember what day of the month it is: "October . . . ;" "I do not know the date, but I know that tomorrow is the Epiphany;" "Some day in February, according to my housemaid;" "I do not know what day of April, 1554." But, then, of course, in those days insurance and airline companies did not provide their clients with calendars.

The reader who picks up Michelangelo's letters full of expectations, since, after all, they are the letters of a great artist, is soon disappointed. This is because he fails to find what he may well have expected: the artist immersed in his grandiose conceptions; the artist about to attack a blocked out piece of marble to extract from it a David or a Pietà; the artist who, while protesting that painting is not his profession, reveals his secret plan for covering the vast vault of the Sistine Chapel with the supreme moment of God's creation of the world and of man, or the altar wall with the bliss of eternal salvation and the agony of eternal doom.

No: this aspect of his genius Michelangelo revealed

to his contemporaries and to posterity only through the magic of his chisel and his brush. To his pen he entrusted another aspect of his complex personality: his innermost human feelings towards the members of his family and towards those in whose midst he lived and worked; in short, Michelangelo the man. His letters reflect his intimate joys and sorrows, his struggles with powerful men who wanted his services, and his squabbles with inefficient and unreliable workers. Michelangelo's letters reveal the whole man with his frailties, his problems, his fears, his hopes, and his disappointments. They are candid and intimate.

Michelangelo's letters tell us a great deal about his anxieties over his family; his sincere interest in setting up a business for his brothers; his constant desire to acquire real estate, especially farms (a concern that grew with the years, for he was looking forward to returning to Florence and to having enough to live upon for the rest of his days); his pride in his ancestry; his interest in finding a good wife for his nephew Lionardo. It is evident that Michelangelo loved and respected his father, in spite of the latter's orneriness. He loved his brothers, who were so different from him in their lack of purpose. He loved his nephew as a father. He loved and helped them all financially throughout his long life. But how many times they made him lose his patience, with their greed, their shiftlessness, their lukewarmness towards him, who surely needed their affection. "Go on shouting and saying what you will of me, but stop writing to me, since you keep me from working," he wrote on one occasion. Michelangelo loved his servants, who became part of his family, especially one named Urbino, who for many years took good care of him; when he died, the broken-hearted artist helped his wife and children. Michelangelo, however, was not "a shin of a saint," as the saying goes in Italian, and if something went wrong, he lost his temper; but his anger was like a summer squall, and soon died down. This is borne out by some of the postscripts he appended to a particularly "hot" letter. In the body of the letter he boils and gives full vent to his feelings; after hastily signing it, however, he cools off and adds a P.S.:

he feels he has been too harsh, too outspoken, and so he adds a conciliatory note.

Like his father, whom he criticized for being too suspicious, Michelangelo was suspicious himself. When it was a matter of trusting a banker, or someone who had property for sale, or a father who offered his daughter in marriage to his nephew Lionardo, or the honesty of certain laborers, Michelangelo never grew weary of preaching prudence and caution. He was not, though he might easily have been, the inventor of that old Italian adage "to trust someone is all right, but not to trust him is even better." Like his compatriot Machiavelli, Michelangelo had a pessimistic view of human nature.

And like his father, Michelangelo was easily offended. When his feelings were hurt, he minced no words, and he was as hard to stop as a runaway mule. He was not afraid of anyone, not even of Julius II, who, with all his threats, was unable to convince young Michelangelo to return to Rome. This explains the so-called "terribilità" of the artist. Once Sebastiano del Piombo wrote Michelangelo a letter in which he plainly told him: "You frighten everyone, even Popes."

In Michelangelo's letters there is a notable lack of tenderness and sentimentality. There is no fond remembrance of places or things, such as may be experienced by a man as he grows older, especially if he has been away for many years from his birthplace and family. Somehow he retained the rough surface of the *pietra serena* he learned to chisel as a boy under the guidance of the stonemasons of Settignano. It was against his rough-hewn nature to express himself in tender terms. On one occasion he says in a letter: "Read my heart, not my words." We do know that he loved Florence; and had he not been kept in Rome by the long work of St. Peter's cathedral, he probably would have returned there to spend his old age; but he could not tear himself away in spite of the repeated invitations and pleas of Duke Cosimo, of Cellini, and others.

Also, in Michelangelo's letters there is a real dearth

of references to the contemporary scene. His letters make only vague mention of the tumultuous political events of the day; and this cannot but surprise us, for we recall that in his time, not to mention the mishaps of his Florence, now a republic, now ruled by the Medici, Italy was invaded by the French kings and by the armies of Charles V, Rome was cruelly sacked, and with the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis Spain secured a lasting strangle hold on almost the whole peninsula. What the letters do reveal is the great fear, for himself and his family, of becoming involved in anything dangerous. Typical is the advice he gave his brother Buonarroti during the Medici's struggle to get back into Florence in 1512: "Regarding the events in our city, do not get involved either in word or in deed." The artist himself fled from Florence on two different occasions when danger threatened from within or from without.

What Michelangelo cherished was tranquility and peace of mind to concentrate on his work. He wanted to be left alone. This is clearly shown by several of his letters in which he finds one excuse or another to discourage his brothers or his nephew from coming to visit him. He tells them that this is not a good time to come, that he is especially busy and would not be able to receive them properly, or that his quarters are crowded and lack the comforts to which they are accustomed. There is no doubt that Michelangelo always lived like a pauper: his quarters were very simple, and his food and drink Spartan. He was generous, however, and whenever he received wine, cheese, or fruit from his family, he invariably gave most of it to the Pope and to his friends. But he liked solitude and in many ways he was not easy to live with: this partly explains why he left no school like his more sociable and urbane contemporary Raphael.

As the years passed Michelangelo became even more unsociable and solitary than he had been in his youth. The twilight of his life was characterized even more poignantly by a phrase he had written in his early days in Rome: "I have no friends, and I seek none." His father and all

his brothers had died one after the other, and he concentrated his deep-seated love for his kin on his nephew Lionardo who lived far away in Florence. He wrote him often, and he often asked him to distribute goodly sums of money from his own funds to impoverished Florentine noble families, to families with girls desiring to enter a convent, and also for the recitation of prayers for the repose of the dead and for the salvation of his own soul. The thought of death came to mind with increasing frequency: "Not a single thought is born in me which does not have death graven in it," he wrote Vasari in 1555. He found consolation in religion.

The reader of Michelangelo's letters is struck time and again by his insatiable appetite for work down to his last days and by his reluctance to give up a single moment of his time for the necessities, let alone the niceties, of daily existence. When he found it impossible to carry out a request of the king of France, he wrote him in all earnestness: "If death should interrupt this desire of mine (to please you), and if it is possible to paint and to sculpture in the next life, I shall not fail to do so then, for in the next life man does not grow old." If eternal bliss for Dante consisted in the vision of God, which implied immediate knowledge of the mysteries of the universe, for Michelangelo it probably consisted in the hope of an eternity of tranquil work in a vast quarry of flawless marble with no contracts to worry him.

We have said that Michelangelo's letters reveal little of the artist; there are, however, many letters that are important, even if only tangentially, to a full picture of Michelangelo's activities in connection with his work. Among these are the letters from Bologna that tell us of his prolonged difficulties in casting the statue of Julius II and the letters from the marble quarries that describe his troubles with the stonemasons, the building of a road from the quarry to the seashore, the anguish over imperfect blocks of marble, the quarrels with shippers, his despair over the drought which kept the waters of the Arno river at a low level and prevented the shipping of quarried blocks. Then there is a

group of letters which reveal his concern and anguish over his inability to fulfill the contract for Julius's tomb, and the litigations in trying to break the contract. Further, there are several letters which touch upon his activity as a poet.

Without going further into a general analysis of Michelangelo's letters, it is evident that they are indispensable for a full understanding of the man, and also, though to a lesser degree, of the artist. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Michelangelo's biographers from H. Grimm to A. Gotti, from J. A. Symonds to G. Papini, and more recently, from M. Saponaro to D. L. Finlayson, Sydney Alexander, Charles H. Morgan, and Irving Stone (whose biography of the artist will be published early in 1961) have made ample use of his letters. What is surprising is that both in Italy and abroad, Michelangelo's letters have not been studied as fully as they deserve, and that as yet there is no complete English translation of his letters other than my own unpublished version.

The letters that follow are chosen from among those that seem most typical and most interesting. The arrangement is purely chronological. In the translation I have attempted to retain some of the flavor of the original, and I have purposely avoided a "free" translation.

(To his father Lodovico Buonarroti in Florence)

In the name of God. August 19, 1497.

Dearest father, etc. I inform you that on Friday Buonarroto arrived here. As soon as I knew, I went to see him at the inn. He told me how you are getting along, and also that Consiglio the merchant (*Lodovico owed him 90 florins*) troubles you a great deal: that he is unwilling to settle on any sort of agreement and that he wants to have you arrested. I say that you must try to come to an understanding with him, and that you advance him a few ducats; let me know what you agree to give him, and if you do not have that amount I shall send it to you. Though, as I told you, I have little money, I'll do my best to borrow some,

so that we may avoid taking the money from the bank, as Buonarroto suggests. Do not be surprised if I have occasionally written you in such angry tones; at times I am quite upset by things that happen to one who is away from home.

I agreed to make a statue for Piero de' Medici and bought the marble; I never began it, though, because he did not keep his promise to me. For this reason I keep to myself, and I am carving a statue for my own pleasure. I bought a piece of marble for five ducats, but it wasn't any good. I've simply thrown that money away. Then I bought another piece, also for five ducats, and I am now working it for my own amusement. So you must realize that I too spend money and have my own troubles. Just the same, I shall send you what you may ask of me, even if I have to sell myself as a slave.

Buonaroto arrived safe and sound, and he is going back to the inn. He has a room and he is comfortable there, and he will not lack a thing as long as he wants to stay here. I do not have accommodations for him for I am living in someone else's house; the important thing is that I shall see to it that he never lacks what he needs. I'm well; I hope you are too.

Michelangelo in Rome.

(To his brother Buonarroto in Florence, December 19, 1506)

Buonaroto. — Today, December 19th, I received a letter from you in which you recommend Pietro Orlandini to me and ask me to do for him what he has asked me. I want you to know that he wrote asking me to have a dagger-blade made for him and to be sure that it's very beautiful. I do not know how I shall be able to please him soon and well: for one thing, because it is not my profession; and then, because I do not have the time to attend to it. Just the same, I shall try to please him as best I can within one month.

I have learned about the family affairs, and especially about Giovansimone. I am happy that he is coming to your shop and that he is willing to learn, for I am willing to help him as well as the rest of you. And if God helps me,

as He has always done, I hope that during this Lenten period I shall finish what I have to do here, and then I shall return and certainly do what I have promised you. Concerning the money you tell me Giovansimone wants to invest in a shop, it seems to me he ought to wait four more months and make one grand splash. I am sure that you understand me, and so enough of that. Tell him for me to continue to do well, and if he still wants the money you write about we will have to get it from the money we have there (*in Florence*), for as yet I do not have any to send from here, since what they give me here for my work is little and uncertain, and besides something might happen that would put an end to me. Therefore, I beg you to be patient for the next few months until I return.

As regards Giovansimone's coming here, I do not advise it yet, for I am lodged in a wretched room, and I have bought only one bed in which four of us sleep, and I would not be able to receive him in a suitable manner. But if he insists on coming, let him wait until I have cast the statue I am making (*the bronze statue of Julius II*). Then I shall send Lapo and Lodovico, who are helping me, back to Florence, and I shall send him a horse so that he can come on horseback, and not like a dog. Nothing else. Pray God for me and that my affairs go well.

Michelagnuolo sculptor in Bologna.

(*To his brother Buonarroto. Bologna, July 6, 1507*)

Buonaroto. — I want you to know that we cast my statue of Julius II, but I did not have too much luck. The reason was that Master Bernardino, either by ignorance or bad luck, did not found the metal well. It would take too long to explain why. Suffice it to say that my statue came out well as far as the waist; the rest of the material, that is, half of the metal, remained in the furnace, since it did not fuse; so that, in order to take it out, it is necessary to dismantle the furnace. That is what I am doing now, and I shall have it rebuilt again this week. Next week we shall pour from the top, and I will finish filling the mould. I think that what began badly will end well, but not without

a great deal of suffering, effort and expense. I had so much faith in Bernardino that I would have believed he could fuse metal without fire; just the same, this does not mean that he is not a good artisan and that he did not put his heart into this work. But he who works is at times bound to fail. And he certainly did fail with much harm to me and to himself, for he is so ashamed that he does not dare lift his eyes anywhere in Bologna.

If you should see Baccio d'Agnolo (*a Florentine artist*), read this letter to him and beg to inform (*Giuliano da*) Sangallo in Rome. Remember me to him and also to Giovanni da Ricasoli, and to Granaccio (*Francesco Granacci, Florentine painter*). If this turns out well, I think that in fifteen or twenty days I shall be all through and shall return there. If it shouldn't turn out well I may have to do it all over. I'll inform you of everything.

Let me know how Giovansimone is. July 6th.
Enclosed you will find a letter for Giuliano da Sangallo in Rome. Send it well and as soon as you can. If he should be in Florence, give it to him.

(*To his brother Buonarroto, October 19, 1507*)

Buonaroto. — I received yours, from which I gather how Sangallo is. I will say no more in reply to yours because it is not necessary: suffice it to say that my work is going well, so be in good spirits. I am enclosing a few letters: deliver them carefully and promptly. I do not know what the date is, but yesterday was Saint Luke's feast day. Figure it out yourself.

Michelagnuolo in Bologna.

(*To his brother Giovan Simone. Rome, July 1508*)

Giovan Simone. — They say that if one does good to a good man it makes him better, but if one does it to a bad man he becomes worse. I have been trying for many years with good words and deeds to make you live honestly and peacefully with your father and with the rest of us: but you are getting worse all the time. I do not say that you are a scoundrel, but you behave in such a way that neither I nor the

others like you any more. I could tell you many things about your behavior, but I would only repeat what I have told you before. To make it short, I can tell you for a fact that you have nothing in this world; for some time I have been paying your expenses and lodging for the love of God, believing you to be a brother of mine like the others. Now I am convinced that you are not my brother, for if you were you would not threaten my father; on the contrary, you are a beast, and I will treat you as such. I want you to know that he who sees his own father threatened or struck is held to defend him with his own life. But enough of that. I tell you that you haven't got a thing in the world: and if I hear the slightest thing about your goings on, I will come by the post and show you how wrong you are, and I will teach you to destroy your property and set fires to the houses and farms you have not got by your own effort: you are not where you think you are. If I come there, I will open your eyes to things that will make you shed bitter tears, and I will make you see on what you base your pride.

I want to say this once more: if you will strive to do good and to honor and respect your father I will help you like the others, and presently I will have a good shop set up for all of you. If you don't, I will come and make it so that you will realize better than ever before what you really are; and you will know what you really have in this world, and will realize it wherever you may go. That is all. What I lack in words I will make up with deeds.

Michelagnuolo in Rome.

I cannot help adding a few more lines: to say that for the last twelve years I have been drudging all over Italy; I have borne every shame; I have endured every hardship; I have lacerated my body with every sort of hard work; I have exposed my life to a thousand dangers; simply in order to help my family. And now that I have begun to improve the conditions of my family a little, that you alone should be the one to upset and ruin in one hour what I have done in so many years and with so many hardships! By Christ's body this shall not be! I will rout ten thousand like

you if need be. Be wise, and do not tempt someone who has other worries.

(To his brother Buonarroto)

Buonarroto. — I learned from your last two letters that Lodovico was on the point of death, and that according to the doctor's latest report, if nothing else happens, he is out of danger. That being the case, I will not come because it is very difficult for me. Still, if there were any danger, I should want by all means to see him before he died, even if I were to die with him. But I am very hopeful that he will be well, and so I am not coming. If he should have a relapse—may God spare him and us—see that he does not lack the things of the spirit or the sacraments of the Church; and ask him whether he wants us to do anything for his soul. As for the things necessary for the body, see that he lacks nothing, since I have always worked hard only for him, to help him in his needs before he dies; likewise, see that your wife takes loving care of him in his need, and if it should be necessary I will reward her and all of you. Do all you can, even if it should cost us all we have. I can't think of anything else to say. Live in peace, and keep me informed, since I am deeply concerned and apprehensive.

Deliver the enclosed letter to Stefano the saddle-maker, and tell him to send it to Rome in care of the Borgherinis. See that it is handled properly, for it is important business.

November 23, 1516.

(To his father Lodovico. Florence, 1516)

Dearest Father: — I marveled much the other day about what might have happened to you when I did not find you at home; and now, hearing that you complain about me and say that I have driven you out of the house, I marvel even more, for I am certain that, from the day I was born until now, I never intended to do anything whatever, small or great, against you. All the hardships I have borne were always borne out of my love for you. And since I returned to Florence from Rome, you know that I have always cared for you, and I have re-affirmed that what I have is yours.

Only a few days ago when you were sick I told you and promised you that I would never fail you as long as I live and with all my strength; and this I again affirm. Now I am truly amazed that you have forgotten everything so soon. Yet, you and your children have learned to know me by experience for thirty years, and you know that I have always thought of doing and actually done you some good whenever I have been able. How can you go about saying that I drove you out of doors? Don't you see what reputation you give me by making it possible for people to say that I drove you out? That is all I need, on top of the anxieties caused me by other things, all of which I suffer because of my love for you! You certainly are grateful to me for all this! But be that as it must, I'll make myself believe that I have always given you only shame and grief: and so I ask you to forgive me, as if that were really the case. Pretend to be forgiving a son of yours who has always lived reprehensibly, and who has done to you all the harm that can be done in this world. And so, I ask you once again to forgive me, wretch that I am; and do not spread up there (*in Settignano*) the rumor that I have driven you out of the house, for it matters to me more than you think: after all, I am your son!

The bearer of this letter will be Rafaello da Gagliano. I beg you, not for love of me, but for the love of God, to come to Florence because I must leave; I have to tell you something very important, and I cannot come up to Settignano. And since I have heard from the very mouth of Pietro, (*the talkative servant who was responsible for this misunderstanding between Michelangelo and his father*) who lives with me, certain things that I do not like, I'm sending him this morning to Pistoia. He will never come back to live with me because I do not want him to be the ruin of our house. All of you who knew that I did not know about his conduct should have warned me long ago, and this scandal would never have got started.

I am urged to leave, yet I shall not go away until

I talk to you and leave you in this house. I beg you to put aside your anger and to come.

Your Michelagnuolo in Florence.

(To Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi in Rome.

Florence, June 1520.)

Monsignor. — I beg your most reverend Lordship, not as a friend or servant, for I am not worthy of being either, but as a low, poor and crazy man, that now that Raphael is dead you have Sebastiano (*del Piombo*), the Venetian painter, share in the works of the Palace. And if it should seem to your Lordship that kind offices are wasted upon a man like me, I am of the opinion that on certain rare occasions one may find some satisfaction in being kind even to fools: in the same way that a man who is tired of eating capons, for the sake of a change in food finds pleasure in eating onions. You do favors to important men every day: I beg your Lordship to try to do a favor to me; it will be a very great favor, and the said Sebastiano is a talented man. If your favor should be wasted upon me, it will not be so upon Sebastiano, for I am certain he will prove a credit to your Lordship.

(To Messer Giovan Francesco Fattucci in Rome.

Florence, January 1524.)

Messer Giovan Francesco. — In a letter of yours you ask me how I am faring with Pope Julius' contract. I tell you that if I were to ask for damages and interest, I think that what I am owed is more than what I owe. For when he sent for me in Florence—I think it was during the second year of his pontificate—I had accepted to paint half the Sala del Consiglio in Florence (*in competition with Leonardo da Vinci*) for three thousand ducats; as all of Florence knows, I had already made the cartoon; I felt I had already earned half the mentioned sum. As for the twelve Apostles I was to make for Santa Maria del Fiore, I had rough-hewn one of them (*St. Matthew*), as one can still see; and I had already procured the greater part of the marble. But since Pope Julius took me away

from here, I have never been given anything for either one of the two works. Then, when I was in Rome with the said Pope Julius, he commissioned me to do his tomb, which called for one thousand ducats' worth of marble; he had this amount paid to me, and he sent me to Carrara for the marble. I remained in Carrara eight months to have the marble blocked out, and then I brought almost all of it to Saint Peter's square; some of it was left at Ripa (*on the Tiber*). When I had finished paying for the shipment of this marble, and all the money I had received for that work was spent, I provided the house I had on Saint Peter's square with beds and furniture at my own expense, trusting in the commission for the tomb, and sent for workmen from Florence, some of whom are still alive, and I paid them in advance with my own money.

Meanwhile, Pope Julius changed his mind, and no longer wanted to have his tomb made. I did not know this, and when I went to ask him for money, I was expelled from his chamber. Indignant over this, I left Rome at once. The things I had in the house went to the dogs; and the marble which I had brought to Rome lay on Saint Peter's square until Pope Leo was elected: so both lots suffered serious damage. Among those of which I can give account, Agostino Ghigi took two ten-foot blocks of mine from Ripa, which had cost me over fifty gold ducats: these could be paid for, since there are witnesses. But to return to the marble; from the time I went to get it, including my stay at Carrara, until I was expelled from the Palace, I spent over one year on it. I never received a penny for my time; as a matter of fact, I spent several tens of ducats of my own.

Later, the first time Pope Julius went to Bologna, I was forced to go there with a rope around my neck to beg his pardon; whereupon, he ordered me to make a seated bronze statue of himself about twelve feet tall. When he asked me how much it would cost, I replied that I thought I could cast it for one thousand ducats, but that it was not my profession, and that I did not wish to take the responsibility. He answered: "Go, start working;

you will cast it over and over until it comes out well, and I shall give you enough to make you happy." In short, we cast it twice; and at the end of the two years I spent there, I found that I had four and a half ducats left. I never received anything else for my time spent working there; and the expenses during those two years were the 1000 ducats with which I had said I would cast the statue. This amount was paid to me in several instalments by Messer Antonio Maria da Legniamè, a Bolognese.

After I had raised the statue on the façade of San Petronio I returned to Rome, but the Pope still refused to let me complete the tomb, and asked me to paint the vault of the Sistine; I agreed to do it for three thousand ducats. The first design of that work consisted of twelve Apostles in the lunettes, the remainder being a certain space filled with ornamental details, as is customary.

After I had begun that work, it seemed to me that it would turn out a rather poor affair, and I said to the Pope that the Apostles alone would make a poor effect. He asked me why; and I told him, because they had been poor themselves. Then he gave me a new commission, namely that I should do what I wanted; he told me that he would pay me well, and that I should paint down to the frescoed scenes below. Meanwhile, when I had practically finished the vault, the Pope returned to Bologna. Twice I went there to get the money I had coming to me but I did not get anything; and I wasted all that time, until he returned to Rome. Once he was back in Rome, I began making the cartoons for that work, namely the heads and the faces around the Sistine Chapel; I was hoping to get the money and to finish the work. I never managed to get anything. One day I was complaining about this to Messer Bernardo da Bibbiena (*Cardinal Dovizi da Bibbiena*) and Atalante (*Migliorotti, a Florentine artist*), saying that it was impossible for me to remain in Rome any longer, and that I was forced to leave. Messer Bernardo told Atalante to remind him of it, for he wanted by all means to have me paid. He saw to it that I was given two thousand ducats of the Camera: it is these, along

with the first thousand for the marble, that they want to take into account for the construction of the tomb. But I expected more, in view of the time I had lost and the work I had done. Since with this money Messer Bernardo and Atalante had saved my life, I gave one hundred ducats to the former and fifty to the latter.

Then Pope Julius died. Shortly after Leo (X, *de' Medici*) was made pope, since Aginensis (*Cardinal Leonardo della Rovere, nephew of Pope Julius II*) wanted to have the tomb larger than was indicated in my original drawing, we drew up a new contract. And since I did not want them to include in the cost of the tomb the three thousand ducats I had received, in order to show them that I had much more coming, Aginensis told me that I was a swindler.

(*To my dear friend Messer Giovan Francesco, priest at Santa Maria del Fiore of Florence, in Rome. October, 1525.*)

Messer Giovan Francesco. — If I had as much strength as I had merriment from your last letter, I believe I could do, and soon to boot, all the things you write me about; but since I do not have that much strength, I shall do what I can.

Concerning the eighty-foot Colossus, which you tell me is to go, or rather has to be erected, at the corner of the loggia in the Medicis' garden, opposite the corner of Messer Luigi della Stufa, I have meditated not a little, since you ask me. In my opinion that is not the right place for it, since it would take up too much room on the street. In my opinion it would be much better placed on the other corner, where the barbershop is, since it would have the square in front, and would not obstruct the street as much. And since they probably would not allow removing the shop because of the rent, it occurred to me that the statue could be made in a sitting position, and the seat would be so high that, if we made the statue hollow inside, as is proper since it has to be made in sections, the barbershop would be placed below it, and

the rent would not be lost. And further, to make it possible for the shop to have a chimney to get rid of the smoke, as it has now, I thought of placing a hollow cornucopia in the statue's hand, which would serve as a chimney. Then, since I would have the head of this statue hollow too, like all its other parts, I think we could derive some usefulness from that too, for there is on the square a huckster, a good friend of mine, who told me secretly that he would put a fine dovecot in it. Another fancy comes into my head which is still better, but the statue would have to be much larger; and this would be feasible, for with blocks one can build a tower: this fancy of mine is that the statue's head might serve as a belltower for San Lorenzo, which is in great need of one. By putting the bells inside it, the sound would issue through its mouth, and it would seem as if the Colossus were crying mercy, especially on feast-days, when peals are rung most often and with bigger bells.

As for bringing the marble here for the above-mentioned statue, in order to keep it from everybody and to avoid its being seen by anyone, it seems to me that it should be carried here at night and well wrapped up. There will be some danger at the gate, but we can find a solution for that too: at the very worst we will make use of the gate at San Gallo which remains open until daylight.

As for doing or not doing the things which must be done, which you say must be towering above, it is better to let them be done by him who is supposed to do them, since I shall have so much to do that I no longer care to do anything. I shall be satisfied with this, namely that it be worthy.

I do not reply to all your queries, for Spina is coming to Rome shortly, and he will explain better and in greater detail by word of mouth than I can with the pen.

Your Michelagnuolo sculptor in Florence.

(To his nephew Lionardo in Florence. Rome, 1541.)

Lionardo. — I received the *raviggiuoli* (*thin, white, soft cheese*), namely six pairs of them, which I am sure

were fine when you sent them, but when I got them they were badly spoiled. I think they were too moist when you sent them, so it is not advisable to send such perishable things. To make it short, I received them. It is unnecessary to say more about them.

I am happy to learn that everything goes well with the property and the shop. We must thank God for it and strive to do good. I have nothing else to say.

Michelagnuolo in Rome.

(To his nephew Lionardo. Rome, August 25, 1541.)

Lionardo. — You write me that you want to come to Rome in September with Guicciardino. I say to you that it is not yet time, for this would only add new weariness to the troubles I have already. This goes for Michele (*Guicciardini*) also, for I am so busy that I have no time to give attention to you; and every other little thing, even the writing of this letter, vexes me greatly. You will have to wait till the coming Lent; then I will send for you, and I will send you money to prepare for the journey so that you will not have to come here like a dog. I wrote to Michele also, and I advised him to wait until Lent too, for at that time I shall be free and able to entertain him. But perhaps he has some business in Rome, and has to be here this September. I do not know. But if this is not the case, I advise him again not to come until Lent, for this September I will hardly have time to talk to him, let alone anything else, especially since Urbino (*Michelangelo's servant*) who lives with me, is leaving for the town of Urbino in September, and will leave me here alone with all my troubles. All I need is to have to cook for you two! Read this letter to Michele and beg him to wait until the coming Lent, as I have said. Learn to write, for it seems to me you are constantly getting worse.

Michelagnuolo in Rome.

(To his nephew Lionardo. Rome, September 15, 1548.)

Lionardo. — Since I was unable to decipher your letter I threw it into the fire, and so I cannot answer it.

I have told you several times that whenever I receive a letter of yours I go crazy trying to learn how to read it. For this reason I tell you to write me no more from now on, and if you do have something to tell me, hire someone who can write, for I have other things to do than to eat my heart out over your letters. Messer Giovan Francesco writes me that you would like to come to Rome for a few days: I am amazed, for, if it's true that you have formed a company, I do not see how you can leave. So take care not to throw away the money I sent you and the others. Likewise, Gismondo must also be careful with it, for whoever has not earned his money does not appreciate it. This is borne out by experience, for the greatest part of those who were born rich throw their money away and die bankrupt. So open your eyes and consider and realize what misery and hardship I undergo, being old as I am. Recently a Florentine came to talk to me of one of the Ginori's daughters. He says that you too have been approached regarding her in Florence, and that you like her. I do not believe that is true; besides, I can give you no advice because I know nothing about her. But I certainly don't like the idea that you should marry a girl whose father would not give her to you in marriage if he had enough money to give her a suitable dowry. I would like you to marry a girl whose father likes you, not your money. It seems to me it is up to you to look for a girl who may not have much of a dowry, and not up to others to offer you a girl because she does not have a dowry. Also, you should prefer soundness of mind and body to nobility of blood and consider her manners and her relatives, for that is very important.

I have nothing further to add. Remember me to Messer Giovan Francesco.

Michelagnuolo Buonarroto in Rome.

(To his nephew Lionardo)

Lionardo. — I gather from your last letter that you have brought a wife into your house and that you are very satisfied with her, and also that you send me her

regards and that you haven't yet settled the dowry. I am very happy that you are satisfied with her, and I think that you should continually thank God for it as well as you can. As for settling the dowry, if you have done nothing, do nothing, and keep your eyes open; for these money problems always give rise to disagreements. I am not a good judge of such things, but it seems to me that you should have settled everything before getting married. As for her sending me her regards, thank her and tell her for my part what you think I should tell her, since you can tell her better by word of mouth than I could say it on paper. I want to give concrete evidence of how I feel towards the wife of a nephew of mine, but I have been unable to do so because Urbino was out of Rome. He returned two days ago, and now I am thinking of giving some token of my love. I have been told that a valuable pearl necklace would be appropriate. I have asked a jeweler friend of Urbino to look for one, and I hope to find it; but do not tell her anything yet; and if you think I should send something else, let me know.

Nothing further occurs to me. Take care of yourself, and keep your wits about you, since the number of widows is always greater than that of widowers.

May 20, 1553.

Michelagnuolo Buonarroto in Rome.

(To his nephew Lionardo. April, 1554.)

Lionardo. — I gather from your letter that Cassandra is about to give birth to a child and that you would like to have my opinion concerning your children's names. If it is to be a girl, you tell me, in view of your wife's good behavior, that you have already made up your mind; if it should be a boy, I do not know what to say. I feel strongly that the name Buonarroto should remain in the family, since we have had it for three hundred years already. I have nothing else to say, and writing is a great chore for me. Take care of yourself.

Michelagnuolo Buonarroto in Rome.

(To Giorgio Vasari. Rome, May 1557.)

Messer Giorgio, dear friend. — I call God as a witness that against my will Pope Paul forced me ten years ago to work in the construction of Saint Peter's. If we had continued to work on that construction until today, having begun when we did, by now it would have progressed to the point I had desired before returning to Florence. But through work stoppages, progress slowed down considerably; and what is more, it is slowing down as we are facing the most exhausting and difficult part; so that if I should abandon it now, I would most shamefully lose the fruit of the hard labor which for the last ten years I have devoted to it for the love of God. I have made this long speech in reply to your letter, and also because I have in my hands a letter from the Duke (*Cosimo de' Medici*) which has caused me great amazement, seeing that his Lordship has deigned to write me so graciously. I thank God and his Excellency from the bottom of my heart. I wander from my topic, because I have lost my memory and my judgment, and writing is very painful for me, since it is not my profession. The conclusion is this: to make you understand what would follow if I gave up the above-mentioned construction and left Rome. First of all, I would make many thieves happy and I would be responsible for its ruin, and perhaps also for its shutting down permanently. Next, I have certain obligations, and a house and other things, which amount to a few thousand *scudi*; and if I departed without leave I do not know what would become of them. Finally, I am not feeling well, and I am afflicted with the gravel and kidney stones like all old men; and doctor Eraldo can testify to that, for I owe him my life. For those reasons I do not have the courage to come to Florence and then return here; and as for my going there for good, I need a little time to settle matters here in such a way that I will not have to worry about them any more. The fact is that I left Florence such a long time ago that when I arrived here Pope Clement was still alive; he died two days later. Messer Giorgio, I commend myself to you, and I pray you to recommend

me to the Duke, and give him my apologies, for now I have only the courage to die, and the information I am giving you concerning my state of affairs here is more than true. I sent the Duke the reply I did, because I was told to reply and because I didn't have the courage to write his Lordship, especially that soon; and if I had felt up to riding a horse, I would have gone there immediately and then returned without anybody here knowing anything about it.

Michelagnolo Buonarroti.

(To his nephew Lionardo. In Florence)

Lionardo. — I received your last letter along with twelve excellent *marzolini* cheeses: I thank you for them. I rejoice over your good health; I am well also. In the past I received several letters from you; the reason I did not answer them is that my hand is no longer any good at writing. So from now on I shall have someone else write and I will sign my name. I have nothing else to say. From Rome, December 28, 1563.

I, Michelagnolo Buonarroti.

This is the last letter we have of the artist.

Italian Criticism After De Sanctis

RENE WELLEK

[In our very first issue we were pleased to publish Professor Wellek's essay on De Sanctis. The present essay, which centers around the figure of Carducci, continues his account of Italian literary criticism which will be part of his continuing enterprise, *A History of Modern Criticism*, of which the first two volumes were published in 1955. Professor Wellek, who is chairman of the Department of Comparative Literature at Yale University, spent most of last year in Florence and Rome preparing the two volumes which will complete his *History*.]

I

At the time of publication, De Sanctis' great *History of Italian Literature* was, strangely enough, not reviewed, and De Sanctis was peremptorily dismissed or ignored as a critic and aesthetician who did not live up to the requirements of modern positive literary scholarship. In the very year of De Sanctis' death (1883) *Il Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* started publication, introduced by a programmatic declaration which asserted, rather sweepingly, that Italian literary history had made no progress since Tiraboschi, that the "more or less ingenious syntheses, instead of relying on a direct study of facts, relied on certain aesthetic, political and philosophical preconceptions, with the help of which they tried to interpret and order facts badly ascertained and badly observed, or even to reconstruct history systematically." The new history would draw on a "direct study of the monuments" and "shy away from any systematic construction."¹ A whole group of erudite scholars made their appearance about that time. They transformed the mental climate completely. Criticism retired into daily reviewing or polite essay-writing, while literary history, in the sense of antiquarian research, editing, sources and influences, biography and historical explanation in terms

of origins and backgrounds, assumed the center in literary studies. One may even speak of a "historical school" grouped around a few great scholars who were not critics and often were even enemies of criticism, though critical preconceptions and theories survived in their work without their apparently questioning or realizing them clearly.

The emphasis inherited from German romanticism on the popular element and on origins is strongest in the intensive research devoted to the beginnings of Italian literature and to the tradition of Italian folk song. Alessandro d'Ancona (1835-1914), who had started his folk song researches in the fifties, defended two main theses in his *Poesia popolare italiana* (1878): the spread of Italian popular poetry from a single center, Sicily, and the evolution of its metrical schemes from an original four-line verse to ever more complex forms.² Biological analogies, Spencerian formulas permeate the vocabulary, but the emphasis is less on the theories than on the communication and description of much new material, as it is also in his other great work, *Origini del teatro in Italia* (1877), as well as in his many pioneering studies of the precursors of Dante.³

Domenico Comparetti (1835-1927) has more historical imagination and literary feeling. His *Virgilio nel Medio Evo* (1872) traces the myth or image of Virgil in the Middle Ages with great learning, and in a chapter on Dante finely explains Dante's choice of Virgil as his guide through the other world. The sharpness with which Comparetti distinguishes between the learned tradition on which Dante drew and the popular legends of Virgil which supposedly derive from oral Neapolitan tradition has been criticized as a romantic superstition,⁴ but whatever may be objected to in the details of Comparetti's book, it succeeds in evoking the mentality of the Middle Ages. It is a reputation study which is not merely an accumulation of opinions but rather a sympathetic explanation of the reasons for the genesis of an image and a fame.

Though as learned as the others, Pio Rajna (1847-1930) seems to represent a stage of lower critical awareness.

His *Le fonti dell'Orlando furioso* (1876) assumes that Ariosto's epic can be broken up into its antecedents and that something damaging is proved because one episode comes from Boiardo, another from an old romance and still others from Ovid, Virgil or Statius. Rajna asserts that "there are no creators in the absolute sense of the word. The products of imagination do not elude the universal laws of nature. Also, what is new, when considered closely, is nothing but the metamorphosis of the old. Every form presupposes a chain of preceding forms; the additions may be more or less rapid, but they are always gradual." Ariosto's invention is often deficient, and hence Rajna would not answer the question whether Ariosto's borrowing does not diminish his merit with a decisive "no." "If he had himself invented the plenty which he had from others, more than one laurel leaf would be added to the crown of his glory."⁵ The evolutionary dogma underlies also the more speculative but equally erudite *Le origini dell'epopea francese* (1884), which argues in favor of the derivation, ultimate and unprovable, of the *chansons de geste* from assumed Germanic epics of the time of the Merovingians. In both books the reduction of works of art to individual thematic motifs and archetypes, which the poet merely combines in a composite mosaic, has progressed so far that the very existence of individual form is lost sight of.

Formal, verbal and metrical problems, almost totally absent in Rajna, still attract the attention of Francesco d'Ovidio (1849-1925), but they too have become external, isolated, and are treated atomistically. *Le correzioni ai Promessi sposi* (1878) was the authoritative minute examination of the two main versions of the great novel and thus of the whole vexed "questione della lingua." *Versificazione italiana e arte poetica medievale* (1910) laid the foundation for a history of Italian metrics, a field still neglected even today. Many learned writings on Dante comment closely on passages, sometimes, as on the Ugolino canto, in open polemics with De Sanctis' views. But when D'Ovidio attempts criticism he does not go beyond moralizing and verbal cavilling. His severe attack on Tasso as lacking in

intellect and character and writing incorrect Italian seems totally misdirected.⁶

The one man of the group who wrote a general history of Italian literature was Adolfo Bartoli (1833-1894). His *Storia della letteratura italiana* (7 vols, 1878-1884) reached only as far as Petrarch, but was a first-hand re-examination of all texts and documents, often in a sceptical spirit suspicious of legends and traditions. The first volume, based on the research embodied in his parallel *I primi due secoli della letteratura italiana* (1880), is a skilful survey of medieval genres which attempts to arrive at a picture of the medieval mentality, and the last volume on Petrarch was the first general study of the man and all his scattered writings. The underlying critical assumptions are, however, strangely simple. Bartoli is secular, anti-clerical, anti-ascetic and favors anything he can possibly consider "pagan," "realist" or "modern." He looks for such traits in the *fabliaux*, in Goliardic poetry, in burlesque satires and always hails any praise of physical love or nature as anti-medieval. Even the lack of an Italian epic is interpreted as a proof of Italian positivism, its repugnance to any "legendary labor, to any poetic elaboration of the saga." "Realism is the characteristic of Italian art; outside its bosom there is no salvation."⁷ There is much learning acquired with enormous diligence, much power of organization, much acumen in all these authors, but there is also a strange incapacity for aesthetic analysis or even sensitive reaction, a lack of vision for critical problems which they of course share with the whole trend of positivistic scholarship of the time, whether in Germany or France or the United States.

Still, De Sanctis had his pupils and followers. D'Ovidio was one of them; he reacted against his method at first but later gave a sympathetic account of "De Sanctis as Lecturer and Teacher" (1903), emphasizing, probably with some justice, that De Sanctis did not encourage work in criticism by his pupils and was unable to communicate his method. D'Ovidio takes the comfortable view that De Sanctis' method is simply incommunicable and personal and that the need

of the time is collective research to which even mediocre students can contribute something valuable.⁸ His admiration for his teacher remains distant, or rather purely personal.

Such is not the case with Francesco Torraca (1853-1938), one of De Sanctis' pupils in Naples. He defended De Sanctis' work eloquently, emphasizing the sides in De Sanctis which should have appealed to the new times: his recommendation of research, even collective research, his concern, particularly in the late lectures on Manzoni and Leopardi, for the study of historical setting and psychological development.⁹ Torraca held fast to some of De Sanctis' central doctrines. He sees, for instance, that "the supreme end of criticism is to examine the work of art in itself, what it has peculiar to itself and by which alone it is alive." He sharply rejects the view that the artist has necessarily to contribute to the betterment of society. He would then become a critic, a philosopher, and not an artist. "His only task is to give body and life to his images which he cannot, if he is really an artist, construct *a priori* on the pattern of preconceptions."¹⁰ Torraca was one of the first critics to admire Verga precisely for his power of representation, while dismissing his theories.¹¹ The bulk of Torraca's writings is, however, purely erudite. Much is "comparative literature," studies of sources and influences, or research on the medieval theater, Sicilian lyrics and Dante, to whom Torraca devoted a detailed commentary full of historical erudition and sensible observation.¹² But in all his many learned books there is a sound core of critical judgment and common sense. A paper, "Donne reali e donne ideali," for instance, argues excellently against the false dilemma set up by Rodolfo Renier between ideal and real women in medieval poetry. Women, Torraca shows convincingly, were idealized in very similar ways in all ages without therefore ceasing to be real.¹³ Torraca also sensibly doubts the literal application of the concept of "evolution" to literature, recognizing the fact of sudden transformations and reforms, and he is clearly aware of the precariousness and purely preparatory function of all source studies.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Torraca is

often diffuse, unfocussed and colorless compared with the edge and power of his teacher. Still he is the best of De Sanctis' disciples, unless we prefer Vittorio Imbriani who sins at the other extreme in being bizarre, willful, and extravagant.

Vittorio Imbriani (1840-86) had known De Sanctis in Zürich and became at the age of twenty-three docent in German literature at the University of Naples in 1863. He gave an inaugural lecture eloquently pleading for the need to study foreign literatures and containing the argument that all the great Italian writers are the culmination points of long developments that preceded them abroad. Petrarch summarizes troubadour poetry, Boccaccio the *fabliaux*, Ariosto the chivalric romances. Manzoni would not have existed without Walter Scott.¹⁵ In a little book, *Le leggi dell'organismo poetico e la storia della letteratura italiana* (1869), Imbriani develops this idea within an evolutionary scheme. Everything great in literature is the organic product of a long national gestation. Every work of art is necessary and logical in its place. A triadic scheme of "intuition," "imagination" and "characterization" is devised. These three progressive stages correspond to the epic, the lyric and the drama and, at the same time, to the three stages of Italian literature represented by Dante, Ariosto-Tasso, and Alfieri. Each stage has its dominant meter: the *terzina*, the *ottava*, and the *verso sciolto*. All this sounds like Hegelian schematism and is reduced to absurdity by the extremism with which Imbriani upholds a collectivist view. Every masterwork proceeds from the people and cannot help being an integral part of the national organism. All other works are, as it were, drafts for the masterworks. Within this evolutionary scheme Imbriani holds fast, however, to the distinctness of art. The poet is an unconscious creator of characters and scenes, not a disguised philosopher or moralist and every work of art should be a unity, an organic growth.¹⁶

This demand for "organic unity" underlies also Imbriani's assault on Goethe's *Faust* as "Un Capolavoro sba-

gliato" (1865). The criticism, though extravagant in its violence and damaged by humorous digressions and gambols, can hardly be dismissed. *Faust*, Imbriani argues, lacks an organic concept. It is made up of three disparate strands: an epic of God and man, a little romance (that of Faust and Gretchen) and a legend (the pact with the devil). Imbriani shows the inconsistencies in the characterization of Faust. There is nothing in common between the Faust of the first soliloquy and the Faust who enters Gretchen's bedroom. Often Faust is "really the most contented person one can imagine, really a comic figure." In general, Imbriani judges by a neo-classical criterion, that of decorum, unity of tone, dominant sentiment. Goethe—Imbriani feels—oscillates too much between the comic and the sublime, the tragic and the humorous. Besides, Imbriani, like De Sanctis and Vischer, considers anything allegorical or symbolic as unpoetic and thus dismisses the second part of *Faust* as "senile," since art must never be general but must always achieve an image, a determined idea, a particular "fantasma." The application of the criterion of organicity and concreteness is so rigid that *Faust* can be saved only as a series of lyrical passages, an album of poetic beauties.¹⁷

Imbriani used his considerable polemical powers also against contemporary poetic reputations: Aleardi and Zanella were classed with Goethe as *Fame usurpate* (1872). He also effectively applied his criterion of unity to the "close reading" of poems. In an excellent short paper, which contrasts a poem on the same theme by Ippolito Pindemonte, a mere mosaic of reminiscences, with a poem by Alessandro Poerio, an organic work of art, Imbriani demonstrates the difference between poet and versifier.¹⁸ Later, out of his spirit of contradiction, Imbriani engaged in researches on Dante which attempt to take an unfavorable view of his character but which amount to little more than unverifiable speculations.¹⁹ Imbriani died early, not yet forty-six. He remains an oddity, a crusty polemist, in character and style reminiscent of Baretti and Tommaseo, a real critic, but one who, like his version of *Faust*, did not quite come off.

II

In the last thirty or forty years of the century one figure dominated the Italian literary scene: Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907). His authority as a poet and public figure intensified the impact of his erudite and polemical criticism. Carducci's activity extends over fifty years — from the seventeen-year-old young man who announced his battle against Romanticism to the last article "Dello svolgimento dell'ode in Italia" (1902). In his early years in Florence Carducci edited Italian classics and from 1860, as Professor of Italian at the University of Bologna, held a key position which was both academically honorable and nationally influential. With the decline of Carducci's reputation as a poet, mainly since Enrico Thovez's brilliant onslaught in *Il pastore, il gregge e la zampogna* (1909), his critical work has necessarily lost some of its lustre as a commentary on the man and his poetry which before had appeared as the major glory of modern Italian literature. But apart from Carducci's achievement as poet, the criticism has preserved its independent value. Still, today we need to make sharp discriminations among the many introductions, speeches, lectures, essays and treatises which fill some twenty-three of the thirty volumes of the Edizione Nazionale. We can dismiss many polemics which, in the old leisurely way, comment, often sentence by sentence, on the writings of some ephemeral adversary. It is also best to draw a veil over much of the official rhetoric. For instance, a speech in honor of Leopardi (1898) is only a repertory of empty phrases such as "avanti, avanti per la patria e per la civiltà," singularly inappropriate to the man who is being commemorated.²⁰ For our purposes we need not pay detailed attention to Carducci's many merits as an editor and even as a research scholar who investigated such problems as Bolognese popular poetry of the 13th century, the early reputation of Dante, and the textual tradition of Petrarch's poems.²¹ Carducci, with part of his mind and a good deal of his labor, belonged to the historical movement and, in his theoretical pronouncements, often proclaimed "historical criticism" to be "his genre." In a

lyrical passage he recommended to Italian youth the "disinterested pleasure in the discovery of a fact or a new monument of our history" and evoked the air and solitude of libraries as "healthy and full of visions as the air and the sacred gloom of ancient forests."²² Carducci could even proclaim his ideal to "raise literary history with the severest historical method to the rank of natural history," and one could collect several passages in which Carducci disclaims the role of the critic as judge. "Judgment? That is too pretentious a word for me. I combat, I admire, I comment; I do not judge,"²³ is a characteristic passage which seems to confirm his inclusion in 19th-century sceptical, relativistic, anti-philosophical, positivistic historical movements.

But though there is no need to doubt Carducci's desire for accuracy and objectivity or his suspicion of aesthetics and peremptory verdicts, in practice Carducci goes constantly beyond the assumptions of the historical school in the direction of both a speculative literary history and a judicial analytical criticism. His historical conception of Italian literature is simply romantic. Art and literature are "the moral emanation of civilization, the spiritual irradiation of the people."²⁴ In his eloquent discourses, "*Dello svolgimento della letteratura nazionale*" (1868-71), Carducci traces a scheme of the evolution of older Italian literature in terms which are clearly derived from his romantic predecessors such as Gioberti in Italy and the French historians such as Ginguené, Fauriel, Quinet, J.-P. Charpentier, Ozanam and others.²⁵ Literature is conceived as representing historical forces which are also social and racial forces. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio are supposed to represent respectively the three Italian "peoples" in Tuscany: the old people of citizens; the new people, the burghers and the peasant; and finally the small people, or the mob.²⁶ This social stratification, which is also a temporal sequence, is crossed by racial categories. Carducci speaks of "Etruscan religious imagination, the Roman social intellect, the Germanic individual sentiment, the Provençal and French spirit of gracefulness, the practical and progressive instinct of the

Lombard communes," all of which are present in the Florence of the 13th century.²⁷ Even years later he would speak of Dante as combining the Etruscan sacerdotal race with the Roman civil race and the German warrior race.²⁸ The Roman, the Teutonic and the Italian popular forces appear in literature as the ecclesiastic, the chivalrous and the national elements, which correspond to the usual distinctions among the main medieval genres (legends, romances, the lyric).²⁹ All these shifting terms and sweeping generalizations can hardly withstand modern criticism. The overcharged picture of the year 1000, when all Christianity supposedly awaited the end of the world, and the vignette of the lean wandering Italian humanists jeered at by German barons while searching for manuscripts in monasteries, are only fanciful embroidery.³⁰ What lends, however, critical interest to these discourses is Carducci's defense of humanism, the pagan and classical Italy which he feels to be the true Italian tradition.

Here obviously was the point of disagreement with De Sanctis. Carducci referred to De Sanctis rather condescendingly as a "gran valent'uomo" who had his "pre-occupations and prejudices, prejudices, of course, of a philosophical, aesthetic and critical nature, which are the worse because they are embraced and followed fervently," but who also was somewhat deficient in learning.³¹ Yet surely Carducci rather disagreed specifically with De Sanctis' whole scheme of the course of Italian literature. From the time he wrote an early introduction to an edition of Poliziano (1863), Carducci consistently defended humanism, the cult of form and the word, the imitation of the classics, minimizing any conflict with the popular tradition. He denies emphatically that "the erudite movement of the fifteenth century was outside the national tradition."³² It appears to him a genuine "restauratio," a return to ancient Rome, a return to the popular and national sources of Italian strength. The whole early Italian literature from Guinizelli to Ariosto is called "indigenous and national," and also the 16th century is proclaimed "one, classical, Italian," while the 14th century was still "individual and Tuscan"

and the 15th "partial and federal."³³ These slightly contradictory statements seem a *tour de force* of Carducci and of many of his contemporaries to assimilate Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio to humanism and the Renaissance, to play down their medieval elements and, at the same time, to emphasize their nationality, Latinity, as well as the popularity of the whole tradition. In the case of Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici, Carducci succeeds in bringing out the popular, festive, pageant-like character of their poetry, but with Dante and Petrarch Carducci obviously has difficulties which he hides behind very general assertions setting off Dante against the Dark Ages which preceded him. Actually, in a close study of Dante's miscellaneous poems (1865), Carducci attempts to trace Dante's evolution as an abbreviated version of older Italian literature. The chivalric principle is illustrated by the early courtly love lyrics, the mystic and religious element predominated in the middle period and the learned theological principle in the late scholastic lyrics.³⁴ By a strange sleight of hand the last period appears also the most classical and hence national though Carducci's good taste made him prefer the religious and mystical poems as the best from an aesthetic point of view. There is, in Carducci, often a conflict between his aesthetic predilections and the ideology which, at any price, has to find nationality, classicity, Latinity, in every great Italian poet.

Carducci as a critic is at his best when the ideology can cooperate with his taste, when he can defend and trace the formal, rhetorical tradition of Italian poetry and can indulge in his genuine craftsman's interest in poetic diction, rhetorical devices and metrical schemes. Recently Carducci's concern for these matters has made him something like a venerated ancestor of the new Italian students of stylistics who appeal to him against the sharply anti-rhetorical and anti-formalist teachings of Croce. They can find many scattered pronouncements on the central importance of form in poetry, of technical skill, of the choice of the right meter.³⁵ Carducci, no doubt, frequently disparaged raw emotion and inspiration and, in general, upheld classicism against romanticism.³⁶ But all this as theory seems hardly

new or even unusual and is never exemplified by a systematic study of style. The nearest we ever get to such an ideal is Carducci's monograph on Parini's poem *Il Giorno*. The bulk of *Storia del Giorno* (1892) is taken up with biography, social background, literary history in the sense of sources, and an account of the reception of the poem. The study then attempts something more narrowly critical in comments on Parini's irony and something formalistic in remarks on the poetic language (its Virgilian elements) and the metrics. We get a sketch of the history of the Italian *verso sciolto* and comments on alliteration, run-on lines, half-verses, etc.³⁷ But all this is not modern stylistics but unsystematic commentary — impressionistic appreciation of individual passages or historical explication.

Still, in his rather loose way, Carducci does reexamine and reevaluate the Italian poetic tradition. Carducci sees Parini as a culmination point of the Arcadia and not merely as its negation, as De Sanctis and others had seen him, for they emphasized only his new ethical content and earnestness. The early Carducci compiled valuable anthologies, with introductions, of the love poets of the 18th century and of the classicist lyrical poets of that century, and late in life he even traced the history of the Italian ode.³⁸ These collections and essays are not merely erudite literary history but acts of taste, for they single out poets (e.g., Savioli) and poems neglected since the Romantic reaction. Also the essay on the early poetry of Foscolo which characterizes the intimacy and modernity of Foscolo's classicism and the high appreciation of Monti as well as the admiration for Metastasio fit into this taste.³⁹ Even the attempt to rescue Leopardi's early patriotic odes⁴⁰ from the aspersions of De Sanctis and A. C. Cesareo, though inspired by patriotic motives and personal animosities, agrees with his whole campaign (if one may use so strong a word) in favor of the humanistic, neoclassical tradition of Italian poetry. Carducci is of course very well aware of the association of this tradition with Italian moral and political decadence. He himself is far too conscious of his own role as a teacher of the nation to adopt an art for art's sake point of view,

but he does often protest against narrow didacticism⁴¹ and, as to older literature, simply takes a historicist view, in annoyance at attempts to judge or to deplore things which seem to him purely facts of history. "Even in criticism I am something of a fatalist." Under certain conditions of government, he argues, only certain things could be done. "I love, for instance, the Latinists of the 15th century; I like the academicians of the 16th century; I enjoy enormously the 17th century poets; I find consolation among the Arcadians; and I am amused at the Frenchified poets." "The beautiful is, to my mind, relative and moral by itself."⁴²

This relativistic universal tolerance is, however, far from complete. Carducci's secularism is too strong; he cannot tolerate *The Imitation of Christ* or Calderón, whose *Life is a Dream* he criticized severely.⁴³ He keeps his distance from Manzoni because he thought of him mainly as the fountainhead of romantic conservative Catholicism. Carducci admired Manzoni's poetry (though he had his reservations about the ode on Napoleon), but he criticized the dramas and, goaded by inflated claims for Manzoni's greatness, tried even to reduce the importance of *I Promessi sposi*.⁴⁴ Some of Carducci's arguments are directed against the whole genre of the modern novel. The lack of an Italian novel seems to Carducci a proof of the poetic nature of the Italians. Carducci's distaste for the "prosaic" novel extends also to Stendhal against whom he could not have had anti-clerical objections. Stendhal, Carducci asserts, writes a "false and affected style" and is "impotent" to create living characters.⁴⁵ We hardly need add that Carducci later disapproved of Zola's experimental novel as "neither fiction nor science," just as the historical novel was "neither an epic nor history."⁴⁶

Carducci's glorification of the Italian-Latin tradition is also inspired by his ardent nationalism, which, at first, took the form of an almost comic xenophobia but later was transformed into a juster appreciation of the position of Italian literature.⁴⁷ Still, Carducci always rejected the ideal of a European literature. This seemed to him merely

the indication of a historical fact of the dominance, from time to time, of one literature: of France in the 12th and 13th centuries, of Italy in the 16th, of France again in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴⁸ More and more his own interests extended beyond the frontiers of Italy: he knew and admired Victor Hugo very early, and later he learned to read German and some English. His translations and imitations of Heine (even of jokes in his prose), the influence of German classicistic metrics on his experiments in the *Odi barbare* bear witness to his interest in three poets: Goethe, Heine and Platen.⁴⁹ Later Carducci wrote a warmly commendatory introduction to an Italian prose translation of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and in a letter he even recognized that the English and the Germans were then "truer poets" than the Italians.⁵⁰

Carducci, in spite of all the incoherencies of his thought, is an extraordinarily representative and, in many ways, appealing figure. He combines romantic historiography, its center in the "spirit of the people," with a humanistic, "pagan" classicism, a sweeping grandiose vista of the Latin tradition with a minute attention to close reading, interpretation, textual variants, metrical schemes, and shades of verbal meanings. The commentary on Petrarch's *Rime* (1876), which reprints and comments on preceding commentaries like an English variorum edition, contrasts sharply with the fanciful generalizations about races, people, classes and spirit of the lectures "Dello svolgimento della letteratura nazionale." Somewhere in between is Carducci's best critical work: the ample commentary on Parini, the essay on Dante's *Rime*, the defense of Tasso's *Aminia*, and the study of the early Foscolo.⁵¹ They are historical characterizations animated by a definite taste. They lack the psychological finesse and individualizing power of Sainte-Beuve (whom Carducci greatly admired);⁵² they lack the evocative spell and theoretical firmness of De Sanctis; but they made, especially if taken in their totality, an important contribution to a reinterpretation of the history of Italian poetry and are, at their best, fine examples of sympathetic historical criticism.

III

Around Carducci arose a whole group of essayists (one hesitates to call them critics) who did much to make foreign literatures known in Italy. Two were Carducci's personal friends: Giuseppe Chiarini (1833-1908) and Enrico Nencioni (1837-1896). Chiarini is a sober, informative student who wrote extensively on Byron, Shelley, Carlyle, Heine, largely with a biographical emphasis,⁵³ and studied Shakespeare sensibly though hardly with any original perception. Most of the essays in *Studi Shakespeariani* (1896) are biographical or source studies, while the long paper on *Romeo and Juliet* is little more than an extended retelling, with extracts and comments on other commentators. Chiarini declares that "art criticism is something essentially subjective which reduces itself in last analysis to one person saying 'I like it' and another saying 'I do not like it'." Criticism is presumptuous, as nothing assures us that our way of seeing is superior to that of the great men of the past.⁵⁴ Nencioni is uncritical in a different way: he is a sentimentalist and moralist, who, for instance, thinks that Shelley's drowning was divine punishment for the drowning of Harriet. With strange innocence he assures us that there is nothing indecent in Goethe or Burns, and that Byron's relationship to Teresa Guiccioli was platonic. But Nencioni has merit in introducing the Brownings as early as 1867, in writing for the first time in Italy of Swinburne, Whitman, Hawthorne, and others.⁵⁵

Chiarini and Nencioni are only cultivated middlemen, while Bonaventura Zumbini (1836-1916) and Arturo Graf (1848-1913) are scholar-critics who aim at a compromise between the historical school and appreciative criticism. Zumbini's main work concerns Petrarch and Leopardi,⁵⁶ but he also wrote on Bunyan and Milton, Goethe and Lessing. The essay on *Paradise Lost*, though highly respectful, criticizes the unity and organization, complains of the clash of motifs such as the metamorphosis of Satan into a hissing serpent, which Zumbini traces to Ovid's Cadmus story, and points out disparities in the characterization of Satan which

are explained, somewhat too easily, as a conflict in Milton between "spontaneity and reflection," clearly discernible in the distinctions between "the hero put in action and the hero described."⁵⁷ Zumbini, in a harsh review of Settembrini's *Lezioni*, suggests that a correction of De Sanctis' criticism should aim at defining "the aesthetic value of a work but at the same time should recognize the importance of content," as Zumbini admits "natural poetry, what I would call the natural poetry of the idea."⁵⁸ Croce, in his first book on literary criticism (1894),⁵⁹ took Zumbini to task as the horrid example of the confusion which had set in after De Sanctis, but somewhat unjustly singled out a man of great erudition and acute analytical powers who leaned toward compromise solutions in aesthetics.

Graf is more representative of the confusions and vacillations of the later 19th century. He adopted simultaneously or successively the most discordant philosophies, from extreme idealism to positivism.⁶⁰ He ranges from purely erudite researches in cultural history such as *Anglo-mania e l'influsso inglese in Italia nel secolo XVIII* (1911), to rather commonplace pronouncements on the theory of literary history.⁶¹ His main work, *Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi* (1898), is largely biographical and "psychological," with the psychiatric and physiological emphasis of the time. Thus Graf studies the diverse "sensory attitudes" of Leopardi: his sight, hearing, taste, etc.⁶² The early essay on *Hamlet* (1878) is little more than an elaboration of the old thesis that the prevalence of intellect paralyzes Hamlet's capacity for action. The emphasis on Hamlet's attempts to reduce everything to "system" seems, however, overdone.⁶³ Graf, an erudite, cultivated, sensitive man, lacks a position which could be defined as his own; ultimately he is only a reflex of the French psychological critics, an inferior Bourget.

All this intensive critical activity of the last decades of the 19th century was not related to any contemporary Italian literary situation. At most, D'Ovidio studied the meters of the *Odi barbare* and Chiarini wrote a biography

of Carducci.⁶⁴ But new concepts emerge with Italian "verismo," a variant, at least in theory, of French naturalism. Luigi Capuana (1839-1915), a second-rate novelist, is usually considered its theoretical spokesman, while its best writer, Giovanni Verga (1840-1922), made only a few programmatic pronouncements. In a general history of criticism neither seems important, but Capuana has a certain interest precisely because he refused to be classified and kept a firm grasp on the nature of art. He complained that he was being considered a strenuous "champion of naturalism" merely because twenty years before he had dedicated a novel to Zola.⁶⁵ He wrote a whole book, *Gli "ismi" contemporanei* (*Verismo, simbolismo, idealismo, cosmopolitismo*) (1898), in which he rejects all such slogans as abstractions. Actually, Capuana has a well-defined position which he described in early theatrical reviews and many articles on contemporary novels and poets collected in several miscellaneous books.⁶⁶ Capuana consistently defends the main tenets of naturalism: a scientific approach to the object of observation, impersonality, contemporaneity and proximity of subject matter. He praises Zola, his generous purpose, and finds in *L'Assommoir* "a sensation which does not remain a simple state of sensation but raises itself, purifies itself and becomes sentiment, poetry." Capuana was one of the first critics to admire Verga for similar reasons: his perfect impersonality, his familiarity with his subjects, "the immense sadness" which emerges from his writings.⁶⁷ Capuana differs, however, from Zola and other naturalists in France by his strong hold on the concrete nature of art, which is, in part, due to the visible influence of De Sanctis. Capuana constantly emphasizes the necessity of "form," in De Sanctis' sense, which is "sentiment" and "life," terms which he uses almost interchangeably.⁶⁸ In difference from realist theory, Capuana rejects anything in art which is not concrete and hence anything "typical" or "tendentious." Echoing De Sanctis almost literally, he says that "type is an abstract thing; a usurer, but not Shylock; a suspicious man, but not Othello; a hesitant, chimera-hunting man, but not Hamlet."⁶⁹ This rejection of the typical ex-

tends to anything abstract; it extends to any overt philosophical or social purpose, to any symbolism; and, in its concreteness, it also finds arguments against cosmopolitanism, the type of "Parisian" literature represented by D'Annunzio,⁷⁰ and arguments in favor of the depiction of Italian reality and ultimately of regionalism, the art of Verga rooted in Sicily and focused on the elemental passions of relatively simple men. Capuana is a day-by-day literary journalist who often writes on topics for which he is ill prepared. He does much that must be described as trivial reporting, but his basic position is so clearly distinct from the pseudo-scientific pretensions of the naturalists and still so deeply sympathetic with their concern for reality, with the concrete life around them, that something like a distinct, though limited, theory of Italian naturalism emerges.

It is also defined in Verga's few prefaces and letters of a theoretical nature. "The hand of the artist must remain completely invisible"; the work of art should seem "to have made itself, to have matured as a natural fact, without retaining any point of contact with its author."⁷¹ But Verga knows well that this perfect impersonality is a "willed artifice" which is "sought for (pardon the ambiguity) in order to avoid any artifice, in order to give a complete illusion of reality."⁷² This realism, which is so objective and detached from the author's mind, thus cannot lead to a polemical work. Its humanitarian mission is only implicit—"a plea for the humble and disinherited without the need to preach hate or to deny the fatherland in the name of humanity."⁷³ The modesty of the claim and the firmness with which the concern with illusion is upheld give to these pronouncements their special tone of sobriety and intensity which is also the virtue of Verga's art which so distinctly breaks with the rhetorical tradition of Italian literature. In contrast to Vincenzo Gioberti and his high-pitched eloquence, it is good to conclude on such a muted note.

Still, one can understand why Benedetto Croce, confronted with the situation of Italian literary criticism in the early 1890s felt that criticism is merely a collective name

for the most diverse interests and operations of the mind and that many of those, such as the biographical approach or the positivistic belief in science, are completely mistaken. He had discovered De Sanctis, but in his first publication, *La critica letteraria* (1894), he still came, in the consideration of aesthetic judgment, to surprisingly relativistic conclusions. His diagnosis of the ills of a purely positivistic historical scholarship is acute and pertinent even today, but it took Croce some eight years before he produced the remedy with his *Estetica*, and only in 1903 did he start his review *La critica* with articles revaluating modern Italian literature. Croce clearly belongs to the new century, and the writers described here must serve rather as a foil to Croce's activity than as a source. He returns to De Sanctis and the Germans for inspiration.

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NOTES

1. Vol. 1, p. 2: "Sintesi più o meno geniali, in cui, più assai che allo studio diretto dei fatti, si badò ad alcuni preconetti estetici, politici, filosofici, con l'aiuto de' quai si pretese d'interpretare e ordinare fatti mal sceverati e mal noti, ossia di ricostruire sistematicamente la storia." P. 3: "studio diretto dei monumenti . . . che rifugge da ogni costruzione sistematica."

2. See Vittorio Santoli, "Gli studi di letteratura popolare" in C. Antoni and R. Mattioli, *Cinquant'anni di vita intellettuale italiana*, 1896-1946, Naples, 1950. Vol. 2, 115-34. D'Ancona wrote an essay, "La poesia popolare italiana," in *Rivista di Firenze*, 4 (1858), 108-34 and 5 (1859), 3-22, long before Ermolao Rubieri's *Storia della poesia popolare italiana*, Florence, 1877, a highly romantic book, and Costantino Nigra, *Canti popolari del Piemonte*, Torino, 1888, the most important collection.

3. *I Precursori di Dante* (Florence, 1874), *Scritti danteschi*, Florence, 1912, reprints an essay on *La Beatrice* (Pisa, 1865), which argues convincingly for her historical reality.

4. Giorgio Pasquali in introduction to reprint of *Vergilio nel Medio Evo*, Florence, 1937, 2 vols.

5. *Le Fonti dell'Orlando Furioso*, 2nd ed. Florence, 1900. P. 609: "Creatori nel senso assoluto della parola non esistono. I prodotti della fantasia non si sottraggono alle leggi universali della natura. Anche qui, il nuovo, considerato da vicino, non è altro che la metamorfosi del vecchio; ogni forma presuppone una catena di forme anteriori; gl'incrementi possono essere più o meno rapidi, ma sono sempre graduati." P. 612: "Conchiudo che se Messer Lodovico avesse inventato da sé moltissimo che ebbe da altri, alla corona della sua gloria se ne aggiungerebbe più che una foglia d'alloro."

6. There is a complete edition of *Opere di Francesco D'Ovidio*: Roma, Caserta, Napoli, 18 volumes, 1923 ff. On Tasso, "Il carattere gli amori e le sventure di Torquato Tasso" in Vol. 11, Roma, 1926.

7. Vol. 1, 170. "Questa repugnanza d'Italia ad ogni lavoro leggendario, ad ogni elaborazione poetica della saga." Croce in "La critica erudita . . ." in *La Letteratura della Nuova Italia*, 5th ed., Bari, 1949, 3, 393, quotes Bartoli: "Il realismo è la caratteristica dell'arte italiana; fuori del suo grembo non c'è salute."

8. "De Sanctis conferenziere e insegnante" (1903) in *Opere complete*, vol. 14. *Rimpianti vecchi e nuovi*, Caserta, 1930. Cf. "Critica storica e critica estetica," originally Preface to *Saggi critici*, 1878. In *Varietà critiche, Opere complete*, Vol. 12, Caserta, 1929.

9. *Saggi e rassegne*, Livorno, 1885, there "Per Francesco De Sanctis." Also *Per Francesco De Sanctis*, Napoli, 1910, which also contains "Francesco de Sanctis e la sua seconda scuola," (1902).

10. *Per F. De Sanctis*, loc. cit.; p. 113: "Il fine supremo della critica è quello di esaminare l'opera d'arte in sè stessa, in ciò, che ha di proprio, e per cui solo è viva." *Saggi e rassegne*, loc. cit., p. 85: "Uno è il compito suo, quello di dare vita a' suoi fantasmi, i quali egli non può, se è vero artista, non può costruirli a priori, alla stregua di preconetti."

11. On Verga see *Saggi e rassegne*, loc. cit., 217 ff. and *Scritti critici*, Napoli, 1907, pp. 381 ff.

12. E.g. *Il teatro italiano dei secoli XIII, XIV, e XV*, Florence, 1885. *Studi su lirica italiana del Duecento*. Bologna, 1902; the edition of the *Divina Commedia*. 3 vols. Milano, 1905-7; *Studi danteschi*. Napoli, 1912.

13. "Donne reali e donne ideali" in *Discussioni e ricerche letterarie*. Livorno, 1888. pp. 289-348. Cf. Rodolfo Renier, *Il tipo estetico della donna nel medio evo*. Ancona, 1885.

14. *Discussioni*, loc. cit., pp. 345, 419, etc.

15. "Del valore dell'arte forestiera per gl'Italiani," in *Studi letterari e bizzarrie satiriche*, ed. B. Croce. Bari, 1907, pp. 1-27.

16. *Studi letterari*, pp. 28-118. p. 82: "Intuizione, Immaginativa, Caratterizzativa."

17. *Fame usurpate*, 3rd ed.; ed. B. Croce, Bari, 1912; esp. p. 145; pp. 226-7: "Il Fausto del Goethe è il più contentabil persona che immaginarsi possa, vera figura comica"; pp. 210, 229, 138-9.

18. "Versificatore e poeta" in *Studi letterari*, loc. cit., p. 349.

19. "I vizi di Dante" (1883) in *Studi letterari*, loc. cit. and *Studi danteschi*, Florence, 1891.

20. EN 20, 203. Or one may refer to the rhetoric about Italy's sacrifices for Europe, "Cara e santa patria!" (EN 7, 161) or the stuff about Dante, the lark and the eagle, etc., in EN 7, 327-8.

21. "Di alcune poesie popolari bolognesi del secolo XIII inedite," in EN 8, 155-343. "Della varia fortuna di Dante," in EN 10, 255-420. Preface to ed. of *Rime* in EN 11, 125-184, and "Sul testo e sui commentatori del canzoniere," *ibid.*, pp. 273-309.

22. *Lettere*, 5, 65 (Dec. 27, 1866): "Il mio genere . . . la critica storica." EN 24, 196-7: "Il disinteressato conforto dello scoprire un fatto o un monumento ancor nuovo della nostra storia . . . sano e pieno di visioni da quanto l'aria e l'orror sacro delle vecchie foreste."

23. EN 25, 92: "Alzare col metodo storico più severo la storia letteraria al grado di storia naturale." (1878). EN 28, 324: "Giudizio? E troppo superbo vocabolo per me. Io combatto, ammiro, commento; non giudico." (1896). Similarly EN 20, 83; 13, 327.

24. EN 7, 393: "L'emanazione morale della civiltà, la spirituale irradiazione dei popoli." Similarly EN 24, 313.

25. See Mauguin, *loc. cit.* This is an oldfashioned, mechanical study, but still it shows convincingly that Carducci often paraphrased or simply translated Ginguené, Fauriel, Quinet, Ozanam and J. P. Charpentier [*Histoire de la Renaissance des lettres en Europe au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1843)]. The similarities between Carducci's speech on Boccaccio ("Ai parentali di Giovanni Boccaccio," 1875, in EN 11, 313-334) and De Sanctis, which were pointed out by Croce ("Il De Sanctis e il Carducci," in *Una famiglia di patrioti*, 3rd ed., Bari, 1949, pp. 253-66), are explicable by the common source in Quinet. Cf. Carlo Pellegrini, "E. Quinet e la letteratura italiana" in *Raccolta di studi di storia e di critica letteraria dedicata a F. Flamini*, Pisa, 1918, pp. 25-48. The thesis of Mattalia (*loc. cit.*) which traces the main ideas to Gioberti and the argument in Galletti (*loc. cit.*) that they come eventually from the German Romantics are no doubt true on the level of general concepts, but the dependence on French sources is quite specific and immediate.

26. EN 7, 72: "Il popolo vecchio, il popolo nuovo, il popolo minuto, o la plebe."

27. EN 7, 69: "La fantasia religiosa etrusca, l'intelletto sociale romano, il sentimento individuale germanico, lo spirito leggiadro provenzale e francese, l'istinto pratico e progressivo dei comuni lombardi."

28. EN 7, 327 (1888).

29. EN 7, 23-4.

30. EN 7, 3-5, 104. Cf. EN 12, 140.

31. EN 20, 110: Pieno di preoccupazioni e di pregiudizi (pregiudizi, intendiamoci, filosofici, estetici, critici, ecc., che sono il peggio, perchè più abbracciati e seguitati)." There are many openly or covertly disparaging remarks on De Sanctis in Carducci's

letters and writings, e.g., in *Lettere*, 5, 225, 4 June 1868, Carducci calls De Sanctis' *Saggio sul Petrarca* "un lavoro di fantasia." EN 7, 131-2 against De Sanctis' concept of Renaissance; EN 20, 115, 152 in defense of Monti; etc.

32. EN 12, 142-3: "Il movimento erudito del secolo XV non fosse . . . fuori della tradizione nazionale."

33. EN 5, 303: "indigena e nazionale"; similarly 5, 510. EN 7, 139: "Una, classica, italiana . . . individuale e d'impronta toscana . . . parziale e federale."

34. EN 10, 196-7.

35. EN 6, 484; 23, 134, 364. *Lettere*, 4, 35 (March 28, 1864).

36. EN 25, 404-5; 26, 177; 7, 408 ("eternal classicism").

37. EN 17, 1 ff. spe. 272 ff.

38. *Poeti erotici del secolo XVIII*, Florence, 1868; *Lirici del secolo XVIII*, Florence, 1871. The introductions in EN 15. There also, "Dello svolgimento dell'ode in Italia" (1902), pp. 3-81.

39. On Foscolo: "Adolescenza e gioventù di Ugo Foscolo," EN 18, 151-83 (1882); on Monti: EN 18, 123-50; on Metastasio: EN 15, 239-67 (1882).

40. EN 20, 103-175 (1898).

41. EN 20, 341; *Lettere*, 2, 251 (3 May, 1861).

42. *Lettere*, 4, 125 (19 November 1864): "Anche, in critica, io sono un po' fatalista . . . Io amo, per esempio, i latinisti del quattrocento: prediligo gli accademici del cinquecento; mi diverto un buggerio co' secentisti; mi consolo con gli arcadi: mi svagano gl'infranciosati . . . il bello per me è relativo e morale di per se stesso."

43. EN 7, 14; 23, 29-30. Here the dislike of Calderón is strengthened by the distaste for the Schlegels on whom Carducci accepts Heine's views.

44. See "A proposito di alcuni giudizi su Alessandro Manzoni" (1873) in EN 20, 299-375. Cf. EN 20, 390: "Una certa aria deprimente" in the *Promessi sposi*.

45. EN 25, 231; on Stendhal EN 24, 282: "Scrivere falso e affettato."

46. EN 24, 384: "Né favola né scienza . . . né epopea né storia." Cf. 7, 416.

47. *Lettere*, 1, 61-2, Sep. 11, 1853: "Abbrucio di uno spregio grandissimo, immenso, sovrumano per tutto quel che è forestiero." Or EN 5, 30-1.

48. EN 25, 373-4.

49. On Heine see preface to Chiarini's translation of *Atta Troll*, EN 23, 93-137. On a translation of Goethe's dramas, EN 26,

41 ff. On influence of German metrics see F. D'Ovidio, "La Versificazione delle *Odi barbare*" in *Opere*, Vol. IX, part 1, Napoli, 1932. *Lettere*, 7, 104 (17 February 1872), speaks of Platen as "grande artista e poeta."

50. Preface to *Prometheus*, 1894. EN 25, 358-9; *Lettere*, 12, 204 (14 February 1880): "Sono poeti oggi molto più di noi: molto più veri poeti, massime inglesi."

51. Parini in EN 16 and 17; Poliziano in EN 12, Dante in EN 10, Tasso in EN 14, 139-275; Foscolo in EN 18.

52. See *Lettere*, 8, 293 (4 October 1873). EN 23, 71. Carducci quotes or uses Sainte-Beuve in writing on Littré (EN 23, 269-290) and Barbier (28, 293-309) and in sketching a history of the *mal du siècle* on the occasion of Leopardi's centennial (EN 20, 1 ff.), but I cannot see that he follows him as a critic.

53. E.g. *Studi e ritratti letterari*, Livorno, 1900, collecting essays printed in the 1880's. Also *Ombre e figure*, Rome, 1883; *Donne e poeti*, Rome, 1885.

54. Livorno, 1896. P. 334-6: "La critica d'arte à qualche cosa di essenzialmente soggettivo, la quale in ultima analisi si riduce a questo che dove uno dice: mi piace, un altro dice: non mi piace."

55. "Primo Centenario di P. B. Shelley" and other essays in *Saggi critici di letteratura inglese*, Florence, 1897 (Preface by G. Carducci).

56. *Studi sul Petrarca*, Naples, 1878. *Studi sul Leopardi*, 2 vols., Florence, 1902 and 1904.

57. *Studi di letteratura straniera*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1907 (1st ed., 1893), p. 98: "Spontaneità e riflessione . . . l'eroe posto in azione e l'eroe descritto." E. M. W. Tillyard in his *Milton* makes similar distinctions.

58. *Studi di letteratura italiana*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1906 (1st ed. 1889-94), p. 232: "Il pregio estetico dell'opera, ma nel tempo stesso riconosce l'importanza del contenuto." P. 237: "poesia naturale, ciò che chiamai poesia naturale dell'idea."

59. *La critica letteraria*, Rome, 1894; reprinted in *Primi Saggi* (Bari, 1919), 75-125.

60. Croce's severe judgment in *La Letteratura della nuova Italia*, 5th ed. Bari, 1948, 2, 210-19.

61. *Di una trattazione scientifica della storia letteraria, Prolusione*, Torino, 1877; "Questioni di critica," in *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Vol. 24 (1889).

62. *Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi*, Torino, 1920, p. 278: "attitudini sensorie."

63. "Amleto, indole del personaggio e del dramma" in *Studi drammatici*, Torino, 1878, esp. p. 64. There also descriptive essay

on Marlowe's *Faust* and a long piece on Italian 16th century comedy: Bibbiena's *La Calandria*, Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*, Bruno's *Il Candelaio*.

64. In D'Ovidio's *Opere*, see note 49. G. Chiarini, *Vita di Giosuè Carducci*, Florence, 1903.

65. *Cronache letterarie*, Catania, 1899, p. 247: "Strenuo campione del naturalismo in Italia."

66. *Il Teatro italiano contemporaneo*, Palermo, 1872; *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea*, 2 vols. Milano, 1880-2; *Cronache letterarie*, Catania, 1899.

67. *Studi*, loc. cit., 1, 63: "La sensazione non rimane in lui il semplice stato di sensazione ma s'innalza, si purifica, diventa sentimento, poesia." *Ibid.*, 2, 124: "L'immensa tristezza."

68. *Studi*, vol. 1, is prefaced by a quotation from De Sanctis: "tal contenuto, tal forma"; p. 55, 303: "Arte innanzi vuol dire forma," vol. 2, 132, 188; *Cronache*, loc. cit., p. 251, in *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, Catania, 1898, p. 26, etc.

69. *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei*, loc. cit., p. 46: "Il tipo è cosa astratta: è l'usuraio, ma non è Shylock; è il sospettoso, ma non è Othello; è l'esitante, il chimerizzante, ma non è Amleto."

70. Unfavorable reviews of D'Annunzio, e.g. of *La Città morta* in *Cronache letterarie*, of Giovanni Episcopo in *Gli 'ismi'*. The polemics against cosmopolitanism mainly in *Gli 'ismi'*, loc. cit.

71. Preface to "L'Amante di Gramigna" in *Vita dei Campi* (1880) in *Tutte le Novelle*, Milano, 1955. 1, 169: "la mano dello artista rimarrà assolutamente invisibile. . . . l'opera d'arte essersi fatta da sè, aver maturato ed esser sorta spontanea come un fatto naturale, senza serbare alcun punto di contatto col suo autore."

72. A letter to Capuana, 25 February 1881: "artificio voluto cercato anch'esso, per evitare, perdonami il bisticcio, ogni artificio letteraria, per darvi l'illusione della realtà." Quoted in Pullini, *Le Poetiche dell'Ottocento*, loc. cit., p. 246.

73. "Dal tuo al mio" (1906) in *Tutte le novelle*, loc. cit., 2, 389: "in pro degli umili e dei diseredati . . . senza bisogno di predicar l'odio e di negare la patria in nome dell'umanità."

Elio Vittorini

R. W. B. LEWIS

[Professor of English at Yale University, R.W.B. Lewis has shown his skill in interpreting American literature in *The New Adam* (1955) and also in interpreting several of the literatures of Europe in *The Picaresque Saint* (1959). In the latter book he included chapters on Moravia and Silone. As further proof of his adept interest in modern Italian literature, the present essay surveys the important figure of Elio Vittorini, one of the pioneer critics of American literature in Italy and, of course, one of the best of contemporary Italian novelists.]

In 1956, when Elio Vittorini published *Erica e i suoi fratelli*, a fictional fragment begun twenty years earlier, he appended a note accounting for his habit of abandoning a work even when well under way. "Any large public event," he said, "can unfortunately distract me and provoke a shift of interests just as much as can a personal misadventure or adventure." Vittorini has always exhibited an almost helpless responsiveness to "large public events." He has, in particular, what Henry James called the imagination of disaster: a sensibility which, like a peculiarly delicate seismograph, can register the stirrings of some human earthquake at enormous distances. The result can be a temporary loss of creative energy; but Vittorini has discovered in his personal life and dramatized in his fiction the way to recovery.

In 1956 the way involved, characteristically, a journey back into his own past; a reconsideration of previous literary and political impulses, a return in memory to his unique sources. This was just the way of Silvestro, the narrator of *Conversazione in Sicilia* (*In Sicily*), who, impelled by a similar sense of paralyzing distraction (or, to adopt the famous idiom of the opening pages, of "furious abstrac-

tion”), journeyed back to his Sicilian birthplace to find in the figure of his mother the embodiment of a past which Silvestro too had abandoned twenty years earlier. In outcome the two journeys were suggestively parallel. In his actual life, Vittorini produced one of his most impressive books, *Diario in pubblico*, a volume which tellingly juxtaposes passages from non-fictional writings dating back to 1929 with long comments added during the year of compilation. The value of such a juxtaposition is announced in the Sicilian novel by its narrator, reporting on the first confrontation of his mother. “My mother was this: the memory of her, young and awe-inspiring . . . and, in addition, her present self created during the years of separation: thus she was endowed with a twofold reality.” The mother, that is to say, incarnates the very secret and principle of reality; for reality itself, in Vittorini’s view of it (a view not unlike that of the Marcel Proust whom Vittorini had been celebrating since his days with the Florentine review *Solaria*), is a twofold affair. And it is perceived in its totality only when the immediate and historical reality becomes transformed or enlarged—through its vital re-linking with the past—into what Vittorini calls “the greater reality.”

Reality, in any case, and ambiguous as the word must of necessity remain, is a key word for Vittorini and probably the crucial one for an approach to his fiction. It is by reality that his special sensitivity is so agitated; or, more accurately, it is the loss of reality which his psychic seismograph habitually registers—the loss of that higher reality as a result of erratic disturbances on the lower or historical level. To say so, obviously, is to modify rather sharply the usual characterization of his primary impulses in essentially political terms. It has been argued that the lapse of Vittorini’s literary productivity after 1947 and the novel called in English *The Twilight of the Elephant* (since then, so far as one can tell, he has managed to complete only a single short story, *La Garibaldina*) was due entirely to political causes; that it was due to his withdrawal, announced in open “letters to Togliatti” in Vittor-

ini's magazine *Il Politecnico*, from the Communist Party, with which, though not technically affiliated, he had been deeply involved. Vittorini, so it was claimed, had nothing with which to replace the communist base; hence nothing on which, artistically, to build. There is of course some important truth in that account: about as much truth, perhaps, as there would be in a comparable account of Ignazio Silone, a writer of a very different order who also, however, passed through the communist experience (which Silone regularly described in his favorite disaster-image as an earthquake) and who wrote his way out of it by converting his personal past into a series of large and representative anecdotes. But the fact is that, like Silone, Vittorini is jolted less by politico-economic upheavals than by their effect upon —by the lesion they produce in—the sense of the real. And to heal that lesion, Vittorini believes (it is a belief he shares with André Malraux and Albert Camus), is a defining function of art: in his case, of the art of the novel.

Vittorini had that function in mind when he remarked in *Il Politecnico*: "I have always denied that it is the task of literature to make visible . . . the political motives of a revolution . . . But there are human motives in a revolution which only the writer, the poet, can make visible." He had it even more clearly in mind when he came later to discuss the exhaustively debated subject of *engagement* — in the usual meaning, the writer's duty to enlist his art in the service of a political commitment. Rejecting that notion, Vittorini preferred, as he said, to talk about a "natural engagement" — a congenital artistic instinct, peculiarly valuable in moments of revolutionary change, to penetrate the historical and political surfaces in order to detect and make apparent "reality in depth." To do that, he insisted, is "to contribute to the transformation of reality," and thus to fulfill the purpose of art.

But of all art-forms, the form known in Italian as *romanzo* would seem the least equipped to accomplish that transforming act, and precisely because the *romanzo* has traditionally been the most closely bound to surfaces, to the immediate and the actual. What Vittorini felt the need

of was what he detected, as early as 1941, in the short stories of the American writer Sherwood Anderson — Vittorini's resemblance to whom, incidentally, is a good deal greater than his overly insisted upon resemblance to Ernest Hemingway. Anderson, as Vittorini quite accurately pointed out, both communicated the sense of a lost reality and also succeeded to a small degree in restoring it; his stories "contain a metaphysical ardor composed of obscure interior gestures . . . lost fragments of an unknowable absolute." And by metaphysical, Vittorini went on, he meant that the stories "tend to absorb the reality to which they bear witness into their own ideal order." This was the achievement as well of Italian opera, the musical element in which "liberated" any particular work in question from "the realistic references of the events being described, to the point of making resonant significations" beyond those of the actual here-and-now.

What, in the novel, could supply what music supplied for opera? The resonance of the larger significations? Larger significations, Vittorini has always been sure, are not to be got at by philosophic speculations, by the intrusive voice of the author ruminating disgressively on the universal destiny of man. His own view of the significating art and the restorative function of the novel became virtually complete when he saw (this was in 1948) that what he had admired in Sherwood Anderson was in fact the chief quality of American fiction generally, from Hawthorne and Melville to Hemingway and Faulkner. It was the quality, as he put it, of "playing it by ear — by the ear of life, and not by reflecting *on* life." It was the quality of making evident the higher reality by dramatizing, not ruminating, by the truly novelistic resource of *action* rather than the philosophic resource of speculation. "Action" is, I venture, the best English word for the classic critical concept rendered in Vittorini's Italian by the word "racconto;" and so important, for a variety of reasons, is the notion of *racconto*, or action, that Vittorini is not only eager to distinguish it from the element of plot, or *storia*, but to say (most unclassically) that *storia* may, on occasion, be left out altogether. "The *storia* is only

the pretext [for the *racconto*] and if there is no actual need for it, may be omitted."

Vittorini's major statement about the art of the novel appeared in his preface to an edition of *Il garofano rosso*. Let me now take *Il garofano rosso* (completed in 1935) and the two most interesting of the novels that followed it, *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1939) and *Il Sempione strizza l'occhio al Frejus* (1943), to illustrate several of the generalizations thus far introduced and to suggest one or two main points in addition. These three novels, I propose, give us, increasingly and progressively, actions rather than plots. They give us, moreover, actions which aim at restoring a reality previously disturbed by certain surface upheavals. They arrive, by doing so, at something so much beyond the surface and the actual as to approximate the mythic and archetypal. And these three novels, finally, may be taken not only as three separate actions of that kind, but as three moments of a single action — three parts of a single work.

Of the three, *Il garofano rosso* has the most abundant plot. Its erotic and sentimental intrigues, its fascist connivings and liberal intellectual resistance, its dope-peddling and disasters provide so busy a plot that its action remains blurred. But the book is not bound to the *storia* of sixteen-year-old Alessio Mainardi, a particular boy in a particular place and time, his adolescent enthusiasm for fascism, his university friendships and his sexual awakening through the mysterious prostitute Zobeida. Those incidents are so shaped and pressured as to enlarge into a *racconto*, an action of initiation, the ritual passage from childhood to a first maturity, the achievement of membership in the human tribe. In its sexual element *Il garofano rosso* draws upon a very deep-seated European tradition whereby the maturing process for the young male turns upon an erotic involvement with a considerably older woman, a sort of surrogate mother (so different from the American tradition, exemplified by the Nick Adams stories of Vittorini's friend Hemingway, where the initiation of the young male turns on masculine companionship in the great woods or on the high seas). But

it is in the political element that Vittorini's transforming art is here most conspicuous. For fascism in *Il garofano rosso* is less the grubby histrionics that it actually was than, as Vittorini has himself insisted, an instance and image of force and hence an instance and image of life. Alessio's entrance into fascism is dramatized as initiation into a youthful mode of life.

But fascism, needless to say, was a mode or version of life that could not but end by seeming a mode or version of death. *Conversazione in Sicilia* begins with that sense of death; the seismographically registered sense of the loss of reality, the radical disempowering of the self. And its action is precisely the great and painful motion back to vitality. In this novel, Vittorini's finest to date, there is a good deal less plot than there had been in *Il garofano rosso*; and what there is appears hazy and enigmatic, partly because Vittorini felt naturally constrained from spelling out the deadening actualities of fascist experience. But the thinness of the plot produced a thickness of action. And through the journey south of the disaffected linotypist, Silvestro; through his encounters en route; through his reunion with his sturdy, handsome, aging mother, Signora Concezione, and his perambulations with her about the Sicilian mountain village in the December cold; through the various conversations which reach their climax in a graveyard dialogue (words exchanged, as it were, in the very land of the dead) — through all of this, we are steadily exposed to an archetypal movement from death to life. That movement is dramatized, here, in the specific form it has taken in the representative literature of Vittorini's European generation: as the recovery of life through the achieved human relation, through conversation, and by means of the human dialogue.

If the first phase of the threefold action I am trying to describe is the initiation of the sixteen-year-old into the tribal life, and if the second phase carries the nearly thirty-year-old man away from the delicately registered sense of death which that kind of initiation made inevitable and towards a restored reality, then the third phase, no less inevitably, ought to conclude the action in an image of the

heroic, even godlike death and departure of a very old man. This, of course, is precisely the action of *Il Sempione strizza l'occhio al Frejus* — or, in its unusually apt English translation, *The Twilight of the Elephant*. This brief novel has practically no plot, no *storia*, at all; which may be why Vittorini persistently regards it as his most successful work of fiction: it most clearly illustrates his novelistic aims. The *storia* is made up of conversations in an indescribably impoverished Italian peasant household; but the household is very indistinctly seen, and the conversations, though they beat to rhythms of felt intensity, remain almost inaudible. Attention is focussed throughout on the single silent figure, the ancient grandfather, the majestic wreck of what had been an immense personality, a heroic builder of tunnels and domes. He is the elephant of the book's English title; and in the last pages, he wanders off in all his grandly collapsing dignity to seek, as elephants do, the proper place wherein to stretch himself out for death. The action is invested with — is partially accomplished by — distinct but elusive religious tremors, as befits a work that touches at all points on the higher reality. The old grandfather is a kind of god; he is blindly worshipped, and he is fiercely resented, the way gods are; and to him, in daily tribute, the family sacrifices most of its one resource, its miserable portion of bread. At the end he disappears, like Oedipus at Colonus; but the vast reality he had once embodied is thereby transmitted to his family and may restore them once more to life. So at least the mother of the family — his daughter — implies when, in the final lines of the book, she tells the children, smiling: "You don't understand a bean. It's not the beginning of night. It's the end." One major reason why Elio Vittorini has completed almost nothing since *The Twilight of the Elephant* may well be that with it he rounded out his fictional effort to repossess and to make perceptible in the form of action that whole reality, the disruption of which through historic and public events his sensibility had so notably recorded.

Leo Spitzer (*Vienna 1 February 1887 - Forte dei Marmi
16 September 1960*)

DANTE DELLA TERZA

He seemed to have stepped from the pages of Stefan Zweig's *World of Yesterday* with his sense of himself as a European of highly civilized Viennese extraction bound to memories of a brilliant city and a most human epoch. And yet for all the signs he bore of the tastes of his generation — his sensitivity to the charm of the verbal invention of Nestroy, the mime of his youth, the incredibly Parisian stamp of his French, the cult of Eleonora Duse — in him they had never become transmuted into the extremes of bitter nostalgia for the past or of moral scorn for the grosser forms of our contemporary life. The secret of his adherence to the past and receptivity toward the present, of his difference from us and his understanding of us, of his candor and unprejudiced nature which permitted him at once to recall the charm of the Karlskirche in Vienna and to justify a church on top of a skyscraper in Chicago — the secret lay in his singular way of integrally living his humanism, of considering the humanist as both a monk enclosed in his thoughts which form a cult of tradition and memory, and also a window open upon the world.

I would not wish to linger here over the memory of Spitzer the man, such as he appeared to me in a little classroom, crouching with feline detachment and then, with an unexpected thrust, tall and elegant while his voice strained to reach upward in pursuit of the flight of an idea, protagonist in this case of a sonnet of Du Bellay, except to note the identity of the man we knew with the scholar, of his external and internal biographies. When he told us that Dante and Du Bellay anticipated in their verses the physical experience of flight, and read the sixteenth chapter

of Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de nuit* along with the verses of the second canto of the *Paradiso*, he was expressing the pride of the new humanist who does not fear technology, the implacable enemy of dreams, but who sees it as a danger only so long as the human spirit is incapable of assimilating and dominating it. Just as the charm of the personality of the man lay in his capacity for justifying and explaining human events, so his nature as a scholar appears doubly conditioned by his loyalty to an ideal of the past and the forms of *being*, and by his sensitivity to the forms of historical *becoming*, toward the ever-renewed forms of contemporary culture, to which he remained open without fear of compromising his own austerity. It was Pedro Salinas who described, referring to Spitzer, the condition of the man of letters astride the tiger of inexhaustible time: his hand never falls tired on the pages he writes, his eyes never close on his reading unless for the final sleep, he is "condemned to perpetual culture."

Spitzer understood time as an experience capable of revealing itself in manifold historical forms, in new syntheses that require on the part of the critic the virtues of theoretically unlimited approximation and mimesis; he therefore refused, in contrast to Croce, to idealize a conception of modernity that uncompromisingly closes with us and toward which writers, poets and thinkers of any culture must converge in a critical selection of our own making.

When he wrote that the collective, choral nature of the characters in Verga's *Malavoglia* is no longer close to us because the real climate in which we live and with which the writer of today must make his stories, is *unfortunately* that of the existential solitude of man, exemplified by the documentary prose and direct discourse of Hemingway, he was distinguishing between the sympathy and adherence of intellect and taste and the objective reality of art; and in declaring his own receptivity toward the latter, he affirmed his conception of modernity as open experience. If we accept the image of the magician, of the actor who pulls everything out of his hat, to which Spitzer has recently been likened, we should say that by virtue of this concept of his he undertook each new reading as an act of supreme fiction,

as if in his effort toward a knowledge that was a *making visible* he transcended his tastes, his predilections, his own culture. The critic, like the artist according to Valéry, sometimes even manifested a preference for his *bêtes noires*, and in this consisted his pride, but also his idiosyncratic limitation.

Nevertheless, it was precisely from the extreme mutability of his mimetic intuition that he derived a powerful aid for his analysis of the poetry of the past. When the task of the critic seemed precisely to concentrate on the imitation of an incommensurable series of non-repeatable artistic acts pursued in the study of the movement of style, and thus to lose itself in a continuing extension, then the fundamental intuition of the eternal modernity of the spirit of the artist came to the aid of the critic in his recovery of the past. It was precisely because the concept of modernity was not a historically binding category that it became a means of penetrating into the heart of an author's style, beyond the classic polarity of Middle Ages and Renaissance, independent of the historical time in which the author had lived. From this result titles, which in themselves already indicate the demonstration, so polemically and ostentatiously anti-biographical, of the power of the subjectivity of the author, such as the "Etude a-historique d'un texte" which concerns the "Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis" of Villon; or textual readings like that peculiar one of the nineteenth canto of the *Inferno* in which the traditionally accepted structure of the syntax is rejected in order to show the transformation of an episode experienced by Dante into a visual metaphor.

This was the field in which Spitzer ran the greatest risk, calling on the entire apparatus of a militant philology for aid: and he had the courage, as happens only with scholars of great temperament, to advance hypotheses and then retract them (with an "es war zu schön gewesen"), to reconsider his entire argument under pressure from another hypothesis, from someone else's more felicitous idea. It was in this field of medieval semantic and literary studies that he provoked polemics and debates with his

fellow scholars, European and American. I can remember a learned French professor of mine who put me on guard against "les étymologies fantaisistes de M. Spitzer;" and I have before me a fine essay by Salvatore Santangelo, "Sulla scoperta di un dialogo nel Codice Vaticano Latino 3793," in which the Sicilian scholar refers to one of Spitzer's hypotheses as typical of a critic who specialized in inventing new problems. But if we pay careful attention, beyond the apparent mutability of his temperament as a scholar, we discover the solid principle on which his criticism was based—the task of reconstructing in its freshness and artistic originality, in the eternal presence of its intuition, the language of the work of art, the whole tradition that projects the name of an author beyond his own historical time. In this sense, I would single out his writings on the Middle Ages—the essays on Jaufré Rudel, Marie de France, the *Razón de Amor*, the thirteenth canto of the *Inferno*, and the *Ritmo cassinese*—as his most felicitous intuitions and his most memorable works.

In any event, while he placed himself before the conception of the artist as before an absolute, all of his intuitions invariably sought confirmation of a historical and cultural nature. When Spitzer in his reading of the Du Bellay sonnet followed with his voice the path of the idea toward its Platonic heaven, he felt the necessity of integrating his reading with the historical hypothesis that the phrasal intonation in modern French already existed in the sixteenth century. This was one of the most surprising aspects of his critical discourse: it was as if the humanist in him, after having risked his philological authority in order to sustain the modernity of the author under study, felt the necessity of risking his own intuition in favor of history. The final fusion of the two was so instantaneous, the discourse so coherent, that the listener or reader remained perplexed, wondering whether the intuition was born of an excess of culture or whether it had managed to invent a cultural background appropriate to it—whether the episode of Thérémène was the consequence of the Baroque spirit of Racine, of which the critic was already convinced, or whether

it was only in the course of stylistic analysis that the critic had decided that Racine belonged to the Baroque.

But even in a case where his cultivated knowledge could not suggest to him an historical certitude, as in the sonnet of Du Bellay, he felt the necessity of revealing the two movements of his critical intelligence, the one toward the eternal truth of the artist's style, the other toward a system of historical relationships within which this truth became relative, certainly, but also within which it received its necessary human imprint. This system of relationships arranged itself in horizontal and vertical networks. Horizontally, every critical intuition was anchored to its historical etymology: the idea that in the episode of the *Baguette du coudrier* of Marie de France we pass without interruption from a message understood intellectually to a message spoken in the ear of the protagonist is strictly bound to the fact that in old French the categories of direct and indirect discourse do not exist in formal distinction. Vertically, the author, uniquely characterized by his style, was set in a line or family of writers, distinguished in it by the particularity of his voice, but included in it by a common attitude and an analogous taste in linguistic invention. From Rabelais, in whom words are a bridge stretching from reality to unreality, we come to Hugo and finally Céline, in whom Rabelais' cosmic scope is extinguished and the hallucination of reality is rendered in an abnormal language expressed at times by means of inarticulate sounds.

Through these two movements, toward the author and toward history, the form of Spitzer's essays arrived at its fusion, presenting an aspect at once open and closed: open, because he never ceased to make felt how every critical intuition, perfect as it may be, could never enclose and imprison the vital essence that is in the work of art; closed, because the intuition itself to which he devoted his discourse, having become a principle of construction, showed itself indispensable, and the reader or listener, caught up in the perfect harmonious flight of reasoning, was carried away toward the conclusion to which he might well feel he could not then refuse his own assent. Hence the inimitability of

his forceful and flexible method, and the at times overwhelming enchantment of his lucid and suggestive discourse. One had occasionally to rebel and go off in one's own direction, but only a truly great critic can wrest us from our prudence and arouse in us, along with our assent, salutary reservations that save us from mediocre conformity. And he was one of the greatest critics of our time.

Now, a few months after his death, we may ask why we should speak of him here. What do we, as students of Italian culture, owe him? A "regional" discussion of one who so strongly felt the unity of "Romania" and who identified Christianity with Europe would be inadequate. Then too, we must acknowledge that his works on Italian subjects are less numerous than those on French or Spanish. After *Die Umschreibungen des Begriffes "Hunger" im Italienischen* (1921) his interest in Italian matters was, until recently, sporadic and limited to a few articles on linguistic history in *Archivium romanicum* or in *Modern Language Notes*. But what it is important to stress here is his stimulating and beneficial presence in Italian postwar culture. In the last few years the name of Leo Spitzer became known not only to readers of *Cultura neolatina* but to those of *Spettatore italiano* as well. His theories of "Zirkel im Verstehen" and the "individuum effabile" were discussed not only by academic critics like Devoto, Fubini, Contini and Schiaffini, but also by writers like Pasolini and militant young critics like Cesare Cases and Piero Citati. He spent his summers in Forte dei Marmi where the young went to see him. He had won a Viareggio prize for *Critica stilistica e storia del linguaggio* (1954); and *Marcel Proust e altri saggi* (1959), edited by Citati, was a model of fresh modernity. In one of his last letters he wrote of Moravia and Elsa Morante with his usual penetration. He had promised us on the *Quarterly* his collaboration. We shall miss it. We all shall miss his example, his passion, his lucid mind and his warm words.

Books

STREGA 1960

Carlo Cassola's latest work *La ragazza di Bube* (Turin: Einaudi) has confirmed critics in thinking him one of the most gifted writers in the country. Born in 1917, he began to publish when he was barely twenty, but it was only after the war that he began to attract attention, particularly through his short stories. Although his previous novels have generally been well received, his fame rests particularly on his short story *Il taglio del bosco* which is considered a classic of its kind. With the award of the Strega prize for 1960 for his *La ragazza di Bube* Cassola seems to have reached a very enviable position in the ranks of contemporary Italian writers.

As in most of his other writings the geographical world of his latest novel revolves about the triangle formed by Siena, Volterra and Grosseto. Undoubtedly this is the less "glamorous" section of Tuscany and, with the exception of Siena, little known even to Italians. It is basically a rural world, rather somnolent in aspect and very provincial in outlook, but a world which clings tenaciously to its traditions and to its conception of simple but uncompromising dignity. Against this physical background we have the story of Bube's girl, Mara. The time is immediately after the war when feelings still ran high and occasional violence still flared up between partisans (particularly communist partisans) and the police and fascists coming out of hiding. Mara, a mere girl of 15, meets Bube, an ex-partisan who has not been able to shed completely the habit of settling scores by violence, as he had customarily done during the war. He becomes involved in a gun fight and kills a man. What would have been considered an act of justice during the war now becomes "murder," and Bube is at first compelled to flee from Italy and finally, on his return, is given a long jail sentence. Throughout his vicissitudes, Mara, who had become engaged to him more by force of circumstances than by love, is torn between her loyalty to Bube and the possibility of a happier, or at least more normal life, with someone else. Her sense of loyalty wins out and her attachment to Bube becomes a true and profound love. This is the theme of the book, in a sense a moral lesson, purporting to show the coming to maturity of Mara who reaches spiritual peace through suffering and renunciation. As a

secondary admonition the author seems to point to the necessity for Italians to forget the nightmare of the war.

No doubt Cassola is a skilful and accomplished writer who possesses those stylistic qualities so dear to Italian critics. The reader, as well, is grateful to Cassola for avoiding the verbiage, the obscurity, and the extremes of colloquial and vulgar speech so much in evidence among young Italian writers. But it is difficult to agree with those who have called this most recent effort of Cassola "a little masterpiece." The book seems to have some basic defects which no brilliance of style can overcome. The first is the extreme vagueness of characterization. Even if we make allowances for the character of Bube, who after all is not the protagonist, it is still difficult to be so forgiving in regard to Mara. The author tells us what she does, but we never "live" her drama. Her transition from a young girl to a mature woman conscious of her responsibilities and of her power for good or evil over Bube, is demonstrated but not created through psychological insight. The second and equally important defect is the lack of fusion between the characters and the world in which they live. We see Bube and Mara move against the background of the Tuscan countryside. But the background could more appropriately be described as a backdrop, for the effect is one we automatically expect at the theater. By convention we accept the physical detachment between actors and backdrops on the stage, but it would seem that in a novel such should not be the case.

All these considerations bring us back to an old problem: what exactly is considered a "novel" in Italy today. If we reject traditional values and accept style as the yardstick for measuring, Cassola has indeed written a "little masterpiece." On the other hand, when faced with the often made statement that Cassola has written a novel of great psychological depth, one cannot but disagree and point to a simple comparison with the winner of the Strega prize for 1959, *Il gattopardo*.

[C. L. G.]

AN ELUSIVE ART

A fascinating book, *The Poem Itself* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York) is a new venture in the elusive art of translating poetry. Its editor, Stanley Burnshaw, who has himself a wide and long experience in that art, and its associate editors, Dudley Fitts, Henri Peyre, and John Frederick Nims, have been able to enlist the aid of a score of experts in French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian literature: all together they have rendered an immense

service to English-speaking lovers of poetry who have no command of those languages.

Mr. Burnshaw is obviously right when he says that "the poetry inheres in the tonal language (the sounds of the poem in the original tongue)." Since no translation can ever transpose those sounds completely and successfully into another language, the foreign reader has to be taught to appreciate them in the original. This is what Mr. Burnshaw and his collaborators do, with learning and patience, for the hundred and fifty poems in the book, and the result is great advancement in the understanding and the enjoyment of the poems. If a recording were available for each poem, hardly one of the charms of the original would be lacking.

Forty-five poets are included in the book, representing roughly the development of Western European poetry (other than English) in the last hundred years. Hölderlin and Leopardi are there too, opening the German and the Italian sections, but they are the only exceptions to the hundred-year span. Contemporary poets are well represented: among the living, Louis Aragon, St. John Perse, René Char, Jorge Guillén, Pablo Neruda, Ungaretti, Montale and Quasimodo. Each poem is given in the original, then rendered in a literal translation and discussed in an extensive commentary. The usual information about the author, the date of composition, and the necessary explanatory notes are duly provided. Nothing which can help toward a full understanding of the text is lacking. But what is really new and invaluable in an anthology of foreign poetry is the attention given to the "tonal language."

Students of Italian poetry will find great illumination in notes of this sort: "How wide the moonlight spreads as the sounds of *luna* are diffused and echoed in *lontan!* *Serena* serenely prolongs the *e* of the preceding *rivela* instead of inaugurating a new vowel sequence" (J. F. Nims). Appreciation of "La sera del dì di festa" cannot be adequate if the alliterations and the assonances are missed, and no praise is too high for a method of presentation so constantly aware of the aid that rhythm and sound can give to meaning.

The Italian section consists of four poems by Leopardi, one each by Belli, Carducci, Pascoli, D'Annunzio, Gozzano, two by Campana, three by Saba, five by Ungaretti and four by Montale. Considering what poems have been chosen to represent Carducci, Pascoli and D'Annunzio ("Alla stazione," "Ultimo sogno" from *Myricae*, and "Assisi" from *Le città del silenzio*), the presence of Belli may cause some surprise. The realistic satirical language of the poet from Trastevere (who wrote in *romanesco*, not in *romano*, as is stated on page 200) may seem to clash with the lyrical tone of the others. But after all, one should welcome his inclusion as another good opportunity for calling attention to a great poet.

Nobody will deny that "Alla stazione" represents Carducci at

his best, but we have still another reason for congratulating the editor for choosing it. It is, in fact, a poem which allows for some interesting comparisons with Baudelaire, Eliot and Montale; and Glauco Cambon makes the most of them. Appropriately enough, some of the commentators in this anthology endeavor to familiarize the American reader with the foreign text by way of comparisons with English and American poets. Henri Peyre explicates some passages in Verlaine and Mallarmé by references to Keats; Keats again is applied by Mario Praz to the clarification of a passage by Montale; Tennyson's "Ulysses" is contrasted by T. G. Bergin to Saba's "Ulisse;" J. F. Nims throws much light on Dino Campana by recalling Hopkins and on Gozzano's "Toto Merumeni" by quoting Eliot and E. A. Robinson. In this last instance an obvious reference to Jammes is, however, lacking, just as in the commentary to "Ultimo sogno" there is no reference to Mallarmé, whose genius seems to us much closer to that poem than Leopardi's "L'infinito" quoted by Cambon. Famous paintings are also called sometimes to the reader's aid: Monet's "A la gare St. Lazare" for "Alla stazione" and Van Gogh for the olive trees in "Assisi," for example, are evoked in Cambon's commentaries.

In a work so enjoyable and so commendable, it is a pity that now and then a translator's slip or a commentator's negligence may mislead the reader or leave him without help when most needed. For example:

Page 271: the Spanish connotation of *fiesta* cannot apply to the *dì di festa* of Recanati.

Page 274: "all comes to a close" is not the same as "tutto posa."

Page 275: why no comment at all on "il brutto poter"? Here the reader is badly in need of first aid.

Page 276: "una fabbrica" should be rendered "a building," not "a factory."

Page 279: "leggiadri" should be rendered "pleasant" not "happy."

Page 285: in the elaborate discussion of the prosody of the alcaic stanza the fundamental notion of *decasillabo sdrucciolo* is lacking.

Page 293: "a little tot in tears" is too colloquial for "fanciullo che piange;" "dazzling" is not the same as "illustri;" "Libro di Lettura" is not "probably," but most certainly, "an illustrated reader for use in schools."

Page 295: "picchiano la gorgòne" is rendered as "beating the monster." The reader will associate the "monster" to the automobile of the previous line and miss the meaning completely. "Gorgòne" is a door knocker in the shape of a Gorgon.

Page 299: "ella m'appar, presente" is rendered as "she appears to me, present," with the following commentary: "his is no farewell to a mere garden, but to a girl he loved." We are not so sure. It is quite possible that "ella" refers to Florence.

Page 301: "sentiva" is a poetic license for "sentivo" and not at all "the third person form." The poet, not "grief," hears the voice of the goat.

Page 303: "già felice" means "already happy" not "still happy."

Page 325: lines 13-14 of Montale's "L'anguilla" draw this commentary: "the fish has crossed the great central mountain ridge of Italy." Montale's eel is certainly prodigious, but we doubt that it can cross mountains.

Page 327: "il richiamo d'uccello della ronda" is rendered as "the call of the sentinel bird," but it actually means "the bird-like call of the patrol."

We hope that so good a book as *The Poem Itself* may soon have a second edition. That is what we had in view when listing the above remarks.

[Filippo Donini]

SAVONAROLA'S SOUL

In discussing a biography such as Roberto Ridolfi's *The Life of Girolamo Savonarola* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), it is well to give a few thoughts to the subject and also to the qualifications of the author before going on to the book.

Of Savonarola, a modest summary of his life and characteristics will suffice. He was born in the Ferrara of the Dukes d'Este on September 21, 1452, the son of prominent and pious people. Even as a boy he was grave and studious, although by some accounts he had more talent for writing acceptable if by no means great poetry and in studying St. Thomas Aquinas and his Arabic commentators than he had interest in the intense field of inspired preaching in which he became so eloquent a practitioner.

According to legend, he fell violently in love with the illegitimate daughter of an exiled Strozzi. When she rejected him after an odd window-to-window proposal across a narrow street, he turned to a career in the church. This legend, incidentally, the Marchese Ridolfi rejects, although not without some entertaining qualifications. Having then become a Dominican, Savonarola was given various assignments—including a brief one at Florence where he attracted little attention. But he had better fortune at nearby San Gimignano; and in 1452—supposedly at the insistence of the young nobleman and brilliant scholar, Pico della Mirandola, who

is known to many of us in Walter Pater's almost too exquisite essay—Lorenzo de' Medici invited him back again to his city on the Arno. There, from the cloister of San Marco, he began—and this time successfully—to speak again.

In Florence he became associated—how deeply is discussed in Ridolfi's book—with the events which led to the downfall of the Medici government. He prophesied, and to some degree furthered, the coming of Charles VIII of France. He became virtual dictator of Florence, where he set up a regime which would not have looked so very strange to Oliver Cromwell. But then—somewhat against the Borgia pope's wishes and better judgment—he became embroiled with Alexander VI who sat on the throne of St. Peter in that city where, even as in the time of Dante, Christ was "daily bought and sold." Ultimately, and as the end product of a long and bitter struggle, he was burned in the Piazza della Signoria in May, 1498.

In the popular mind, he is associated with "the burning of the vanities," in which, according to the widely accepted—but some say exaggerated—story, the works of great artists, notably Botticelli, were given to the fire, along with the masks and with the indecent pictures and writings which were associated with the Carnival.

To students of the conflict between those who wished the Church to live as Christ and his apostles did, and those who saw in it a safe and wordly refuge, he was the precursor of inevitable reform—whether by Martin Luther, or within the structure of the Church itself. If so, he was simply the latest commander in an army that had marched since Christianity began. Leave out the East with its Paulicians and its Bogomils, and Europe with its Albigensians and its followers of Peter Waldo. Even in Italy we have Arnold of Brescia and Dante's Fra Dolcino, to say nothing of such holy madmen as Segarello. The Franciscan movement itself was in part a manifestation of the same conflict.

As for the author, Roberto Ridolfi has a surprisingly large list of qualifications. He began as a student of chemistry, but soon turned to literature and history, in which two fields he has published more than one hundred books. He is a Florentine by birth and ancestry, and hence a native-born component of that "fifth element of the universe" which Florence and its citizens were said by Pope Boniface VIII to be. He has demonstrated his skill in biography with a life of Machiavelli which won the Marzotto Prize in 1954.

Of his more special equipment for writing this life of Fra Girolamo, let him speak for himself. Stating that "a great living scholar, Giovanni Papini . . . , sometimes with flatteries (which come hard to him) and more often with mocking sallies," had prevailed on him to take on the task, he added that "it may seem a strange

trick of fate that such a work should have fallen to my lot, descended as I am in direct line, *ex filia*, from Lorenzo de' Medici, and at the same time from that Giovambattista Ridolfi who was, together with Valori and Soderini, practically the leader and the standard bearer of the Friar's faction." It should also be added that the Marchese has devoted a full twenty years to the study of Savonarola. This being the case, it would be a little more than extraordinary if his full-length and carefully developed study of so significant a figure of the Italian Renaissance were not both informative and important. This it is. Indeed, while I do not agree with Papini that "this will be for all time the definitive and classic biography of the celebrated Florentine"—for history being alive and fluid, this cannot be said of any biography, however competent—it is certainly true that from now on no one will ever deal with Savonarola without carefully consulting the Ridolfi book. It is built out of love, sympathy, care, patience, and scholarship.

But since we have noted the obvious virtues, it would be remiss not to note some of the less obvious faults. They all come from the author's sincere devotion to the Friar which leads him to present his material with emphases and interpretations which will give his opinions support. I will not stress the fact that you can read the book and barely realize that on a February day in 1497 boys and girls paraded through the streets casting into the flames paintings by Lorenzo da Credi and manuscripts of Boccaccio and Ovid while they sang songs about holy madness. Yet this happened, and could hardly lead to any lasting new morality.

More important is the author's reinterpretation of the exchanges between Savonarola and Lorenzo the Magnificent on the latter's death bed. After repeating the story that Lorenzo summoned the Dominican and asked to be confessed, he states that it has been said that Lorenzo then acknowledged various crimes including the sack of Volterra, but when Savonarola asked him to give back to Florence her liberty, he refused. Savonarola then turned his back, and left him. "This legend," says Ridolfi, "seems to have had its origin in some tale of Fra Silvestro Maruffi." Maybe—but it was not inconsistent to the character of a man who had some of the qualities of a fanatic.

The Marchese, or so it seems to me, also too easily condones Savonarola for his part in the disastrous (to Italy, not merely to Florence) adventure of Charles VIII of France. It is true that Capponi, who was close to the Friar, kept Charles from the city with his shrewd "if you sound your trumpets, we will ring our bells," and the invaders might have come whatever Girolamo did. But the fact is that he aided and abetted the French monarch, and from then on—and until modern times—Italy was a prey to

conquerors. Up until then she had been relatively free of foreign domination since Frederick II died in 1250.

Lastly, it does not seem to me that Marchese Ridolfi's sufficiently realizes that, although Savonarola may have been a great and eloquent preacher, he had few of the qualities needed for political leadership. On the one hand, he was not pliable, and on the other he did not know how to be unyielding. In his own way, to take one example, he was the leader of revolution, yet how could he be a revolutionary leader when something legalistic—in a theological way—in his character made him at least temporarily take orders from his adversary the Pope? Certainly he scrapped his most potent weapon when he ceased to speak at Alexander's command. When he began again it was too late.

Saying this, however, is not intended to belittle the ultimate integrity of his devotion to what he thought was both God's will and good, nor his courage when he came to "the moment of truth" upon the scaffold. What profiteth it a man, he might say, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Savonarola could not even gain Florence for very long, but his soul he did keep. And this, Roberto Ridolfi convincingly shows us.

[Thomas C. Chubb]

ROMANTICS AND POLEMICS

In the first lines of the "Preface" to *The Controversy on Romanticism in Italy, First Phase 1816-1823* (New York: Vanni), Grazia Avitabile expresses the purpose of her book: "to present the basic ideas governing literary romanticism in Italy during the first phase of the movement." This phase, limited by the writer to the period between 1816 and 1823, is further subdivided into three shorter periods: (1) 1816 and the writings of Lodovico di Breme (*Intorno all'ingiustizia di alcuni giudizi letterari italiani*), Pietro Borsieri (*Avventure letterarie di un giorno . . .*) and Giovanni Berchet (*Lettera semiseria*); (2) the publication of *Il Conciliatore*; (3) Manzoni's *Lettera sul Romanticismo* and the essay *Del fanatismo e della tolleranza* by Giuseppe Nicolini. Two chapters dealing with background material precede the discussion proper of those problems posed by the romantic period which are considered by the author. The first reviews the political and social (rather than literary) climate of Italy, which the author regards as a necessary introduction for the study of the Romantic revolt. The second deals with Mme de Staël's well-known article *Sulla maniera e l'utilità delle traduzioni*, published in 1816 in the *Biblioteca italiana*.

Both in substance and in method Miss Avitabile's book belongs

more to the category of earnest compilations and detailed surveys than to that of profound studies of the problems that agitated an important period of history. Upon finishing the book, a reader who is reasonably familiar with the subject may well feel that the author has remained on the surface of the literary phenomenon of Romanticism and wonder whether it would not have been more rewarding to read for himself, in the collections edited by Calcaterra and Bellorini, the original texts of the period.

The work does indeed abound in numerous details of content, but they fail to receive the necessary critical clarification which their importance demands in the definition of Italian Romanticism. Of prime importance to the author's conception of the Italian movement are the political and the socio-pedagogical element. The literary factor finds no justification in itself but seems to be only a derivative of these two elements. This interpretation is, as is generally known, the most widespread. It is also, however, the least adequate for an understanding of the two major representatives of Italian literature of the period, Manzoni and Leopardi, both of whom reached their cultural and spiritual maturity precisely during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century.

The author repeatedly speaks of the distinction between romanticists and classicists in the following rather ambiguous terms: "a dynamic concept of life warring against a static conception. It is this conflict which is at the basis of the classico-romantic controversy in Italy" (p. 23). Although it is true that Di Breme (and with him all the others who belong to the romantic current) writes, "We are inert, we are apathetic in the cultivation of truth and the sublime" (p. 34), his words do not, however, imply any need for a dynamic conception of life and his emphasis centers on the words "verità" and "sublime," whose meaning Miss Avitabile does not analyze and explain. It is rather in the understanding that Di Breme and others had of the concept of truth that one must seek the kernel of the literary phenomenon which goes under the name of Italian Romanticism. The direct and immediate expression of romantic controversy is, on the contrary, what attracts the author's attention. Thus, when in summarizing the ideas of various writers Miss Avitabile comes across references to reason, philosophy, morals, religion and intellect, she does not grasp their full significance in relation to art, and, as a result, she seems somewhat surprised. The influence of Croce's aesthetics is clearly evident in this rather hasty judgment: "The authors" — she writes of Berchet and Di Breme — "did not possess a well-defined conception of literature either in an aesthetic sense or in the sense of poetics," and "they abused such words as 'philosophy,' 'nature,' 'truth,' without defining them" (pp. 47-48). But perhaps, Borsieri (just to add another name), in his vision of life after the moral and intellectual disillusion of the Enlightenment, is

more nearly justified in desiring that poets, philosophers and moralists should belong to the same category (p. 49), than a twentieth-century critic who wishes wholly to apply aesthetic criteria of this time to any former literary period.

In reality, it was a profound sense of spiritual uneasiness and not a mere desire for novelty and realism which the theorists of Italian Romanticism expressed when they had recourse to reason, intellect and truth, all of which they opposed to the unbridled lyrical pantheism of the Germans as well as to the encroaching equality-obsessed influence of the French Revolution. Out of this spiritual crisis of the time there came forth — with either positive or negative solutions, but with man at the center of its artistic and moral concern — the *Pentecoste*, *Cinque maggio*, *Adelchi*, *I promessi sposi*, all by Manzoni, as well as the *Operette morali* and the *Canti* of Leopardi; and these are works which synthesize the most genuine expression and meaning of Italian Romanticism. Furthermore, Miss Avitabile never mentions Rosmini who had a great influence on more than one Romantic writer, nor does she discuss the *Lettre à M. Chauvet* or the preface to *I promessi sposi* or even the *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica*. And again, these are fundamental texts for a proper understanding of the relationship between literature and philosophy in the Romantic period. So too, the Romantic's predilection for Shakespeare at the expense of French classical tragedy could have furnished the author with other useful considerations. But Miss Avitabile is inclined to consider the identification of literature with moral philosophy as a confusion of two distinct fields.

The "realistic" and "popular" character which the Romantics demanded in literature, and which is so greatly emphasized by the author, is best explained as a further expression of the same necessity for a profound meditation of human destiny. In the *Lettera semiseria* Berchet writes unequivocally: "Fate di piacere al popolo vostro; investigate l'anima di lui; pascetelo di pensieri e non di vento." Baretti expressed similar ideas in the *Frusta letteraria* (mentioned only incidentally by the author) when he accused the writers of his time of mental sloth: "... questa maledetta, maledettissima pigrizia" — he apostrophizes — "che resa signora, anzi tiranna delle menti nostre, non ci permette più di durare quella fatica di studio e di meditazione che debbe assolutamente essere durata da chiunque presume adoperare la penna" (no. 16, 15 maggio 1764).

The social problem, the war against the unities and mythology, as well as against the traditional language of poetry, "the brotherhood of man," so dear to the author, do not constitute in themselves the core of Romanticism, but they are elements which go into the making of that "profound meditation on reality which alone can

console man for the brevity of this anxious life," to repeat Di Breme's words quoted in Miss Avitabile's book (p. 39). In this light, then, Ermes Visconti's wish "that the truth dictated by our hearts and discovered and recognized by reason be infused into poetry" (p. 114), sounds more than justified. Equally justified is Berchet's statement in which he declares: "More important studies have awakened in us a philosophic tendency which makes us desirous to know the causes of things more than the things themselves" (p. 128). Both find corroboration in the *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica*, and are not the expression of any confusion between art and morality.

The final statement the author makes on Manzoni and Italian Romanticism does not seem proper: "[Manzoni's] personal position in accepting romanticism does add a new note to the theories expressed earlier, but keeps within the framework of a conception of literature subordinated to, and limited by, a moralistic purpose." "This didacticism" — Miss Avitabile states further — "was one of the points accentuated by the *conciliatoristi*" (pp. 145-46). The reader, once again, is confronted here, at Manzoni's expense, with the inflexible law of Croce's aesthetics.

I shall conclude by saying that the date of the termination of Italian Romanticism (and not only of the first phase) in its "basic ideas" should not have been assigned to the year 1823, but rather, if at all, to 1827, the year of publication of *I promessi sposi*, the *Operette morali*, and of the first novel by Guerrazzi, *La battaglia di Benevento*. It is with this novel that Italian literature assumes a definite historical and patriotic orientation, and the element of adventure (due to Sir Walter Scott's influence) begins to take the place of the analysis of the human spirit. Mazzini and Guerrazzi are, indeed, the new theorists of this new trend in literature.

[Nicolae Iliescu]

AN ITALIAN STORY: CONCLUSION

After a prolonged interval the much awaited second part of Vasco Pratolini's *Una storia italiana* has appeared under the symbolic title *Lo scialo* (Mondadori: Milan). In alluding to certain lines of Montale, which appear on the title page of the novel:

La vita è questo scialo
di triti fatti, vano
più che crudele.
E la vita è crudele più che vana,

Pratolini has indeed given us an extremely complicated but convincing portrayal of the substance of these lines. It should be stated immediately that *Lo scialo* is, from all points of view, a

much more successful work than *Metello*, the first part of *Una storia italiana*. In the earlier work the political convictions of the author were never thoroughly absorbed into the artistic intent; on the contrary they remained distinct from it, continually distracting the reader and leading him into social and political considerations rather than toward an aesthetic experience. Furthermore, in *Metello*, as the very title implies, Pratolini had set for himself the task of concentrating on one central character, thus forcing himself into a pattern that does not correspond to his creative abilities. It is sufficient to recall that most of Pratolini's books (and by far the more successful) bear titles strongly suggestive of "collective" rather than individual stories, as for example *Il quartiere*, *Le ragazze di San Frediano*, *Cronache di poveri amanti*. All of these works imply in their titles, and have in reality, a particular world, a "little cosmos," as the true protagonist.

Fortunately, in *Lo scialo* Pratolini has returned to this technique so much more congenial to him, and it may be called a "choral" novel in which the milieu, the *ambiente*, is the true protagonist and the individual characters merely single manifestations. It is true that as in *Metello* the social and political preoccupations of the author are equally evident in *Lo scialo*, but in this later work they are unobtrusive and well fused with the development of the characters and the unfolding of the story. Taking up the tale, chronologically speaking, where *Metello* had left it, *Lo scialo* begins about 1910 and brings us up to the early thirties, when the fascist supremacy became complete and unchallenged. Considering this background of the First World War, the ensuing political struggle, and the fascist sweep into power (all these are events of national magnitude and importance), it is true that Pratolini's novel may be called "Una storia italiana." But it is Florence which remains throughout the story not only its geographical center, but also the locale which gives a particular and very Florentine flavor to all the events, no matter how national in scope they may have been. Hence "A Florentine Story" might have seemed a more appropriate name.

But this seems a minor consideration in view of the fact that *Lo scialo* is composed of two thick volumes amounting to well over 1300 pages, a monumental task indeed, that manages to retain the undiminished attention of the reader to the very end. As in *Cronache di poveri amanti*, Pratolini succeeds in keeping tight control of the innumerable characters, and the large threads that form the plot are cleverly and neatly brought into a single narrative network. As has been stated, the book is definitely anti-fascist in orientation, as much so as Pratolini the man is; nevertheless, all the characters who share this point of view with the author are the weakest and poorest in human and spiritual terms, while artis-

tically they are the most significant and the best portrayed. Indeed, Pratolini seems at his best when he portrays characters in the "negative" sense, that is to say when his characters are failures in life. When, on the other hand, he attempts the idealization of a character who shares his point of view, we have, as in the case of Maciste in *Cronache di poveri amanti* or of Metello himself, very meager and nebulous characterizations. The best example of this "negative" sort of character is Giovanni in *Lo scialo*. Giovanni appears in the beginning of the book as a young socialist, apparently inspired by high ideals, but as the tale unfolds and as the price for ideals begins to be exacted by life, we see his true nature and character come to the surface. By the time the book reaches its end, life has totally defeated Giovanni, and his mediocre and scheming character finds redemption only in the profoundly human comprehension on the part of the author. Equally as "failures" must be regarded the other important characters: Nella who strongly reminds us of Emma Bovary in her search for a great passion; Ninì and her search for happiness in a sequence of sordid and devious sexual experiences; Adamo and his love seemingly destined to tragic futility; Folco whose dream of power finds little satisfaction in his fearless and cruel exploits as a fascist *squadrista*; and finally Fernando who even as a young boy tastes the bitterness of defeat. All these characters belong to the Florentine middle class, the social milieu within which Pratolini successfully reconstructs an epoch in historical terms and achieves artistic reality through keen and accurate psychological insight.

Pratolini is one of the few Italian writers of this period who still conceives of the novel as a "story" to be told through the creation of characters; in *Lo scialo* he has achieved his aim to a high degree. In spite of the fact that *Lo scialo* has not won any of the many literary prizes that clutter the Italian literary world, it still remains one of the most significant novels to appear in Italy in 1960.

[C. L. G.]

Items

ITALY, whose history spans more than 2,500 years, is politically one of the youngest modern nations. On March 17, 1961, Italy will celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of her unification.

Most of the Centennial celebrations, titled "ITALIA '61", will take place in Turin, where several large expositions will be held.

Appropriately, celebrations will take place in various parts of the United States, where several million Americans look to Italy as the land of their forefathers. Here the Centennial celebrations will provide an occasion to bring into new focus the bonds of culture and commerce between Italy and America. Much publicity has already been given to the recently concluded Neiman-Marcus' Italian Fortnights in Dallas. On a grand scale also will be the Festival of Italy which will be held in Philadelphia early in 1961. But the Italian Centennial will be honored in many other cities and in numerous colleges and universities from Maine to California with lectures, exhibits, and musical events, which will draw attention to Italy's cultural and scientific accomplishments during her first century of nationhood

and to her remarkable social and economic progress in recent years.

ON THE NINETEENTH of June, earlier this year, a celebration was held in Petrarch's "native" city of Arquà honoring Ernest Hatch Wilkins on his eightieth birthday. For his immense and original labors in establishing the facts of Petrarch's life, the chronology of his correspondence and the canon of his works, the city of Arquà has enrolled this *amicus transatlanticus* as one of its citizens. As a scholarly tribute a committee composed of Giuseppe Billanovich, Umberto Bosco, Gianfranco Contini, Alessandro Prosdocimi, B. L. Ullman, and Roberto Weiss, has sponsored a new edition, the third, of Professor Wilkins's fundamental description of *Petrarch's Correspondence*. It incorporates the author's most recent additions and revisions, and it includes a *tabula gratulatoria* of friends and admirers. The new volume appears in the series *Medioevo e Umanesimo* published by Antenore in Padua.

The Editors of the *Italian Quarterly* wish to add their congratulations and to express their admiration for Professor Wilkins.

SINCE LAST ACCOUNTING a great many books have appeared on Italian matters. Among them are the following: Anthony Rhodes, *D'Annunzio, The Poet as Superman* (McDowell, Obolensky: New York); Thomas Bishop, *Pirandello and the French Theater* (New York University Press: New York); Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *Petrarch's Later Years* (Medieval Academy of America: Cambridge); E. F. Jacob, ed., *Italian Renaissance Studies: A Tribute to the Late Cecilia M. Ady* (Barnes and Noble: New York); H. H. Golden and S. O. Simches, *Modern Italian Language and Literature: A Bibliography of Homage Studies* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge); Joseph Tusiani, trans., *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo* (Noonday Press: New York); Francesco De Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature* (Basic Books: New York), a reissue of Joan Redfern's translation; Leo Sherley-Price, trans., *St. Francis of Assisi: His Life and Writings as Recorded by His Contemporaries* (Harper: New York); Richard Friedenthal, *Leonardo da Vinci: A Pictorial Biography* (Viking: New York); Pierre van Passen, *A Crown of Fire: the Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola* (Scribner: New York); Arthur Machen, trans., *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt* (Putnam: New York), which has now reached the fifth volume; Giorgio Bassani, *The Gold Rimmed Spectacles* (Ath-

eneum: New York); Carlo Cassola, *Fausto and Anna* (Pantheon Books: New York); Antonio Barolini, *Our Last Family Countess and Related Stories* (Harper: New York); Ada Louise Huxtable, *Pier Luigi Nervi* (Braziller: New York), one of a series of studies of great modern architects; Paul MacKendrick, *The Mute Stones Speak: the Story of Archaeology in Italy* (St. Martin's Press: New York); D. R. Coffin, *The Villa D'Este at Tivoli* (Princeton University Press: Princeton); Gabriel Faure, *Gardens of Rome* (Essential Books: Fair Lawn, New Jersey); C. A. Willemsen and D. Odenthal, *Apulia: Imperial Splendor in Southern Italy* (Praeger: New York); James Morris, *The World of Venice* (Pantheon: New York); Anthony Thorne, *Venice* (Studio-Viking: New York); Elizabeth Bowen, *A Time in Rome* (Knopf: New York); Aubrey Menen, *Rome for Ourselves* (McGraw Hill: New York); William Sansom, *The Bay of Naples* (Studio-Viking: New York); James Lees-Milne, *Baroque in Italy* (Macmillan: New York), a study of architecture; Millard Meiss, *Giotto and Assisi* (New York University Press: New York); Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period* (Princeton University Press: Princeton), the fifth volume of a definitive study; Charles H. Morgan, *The Life of Michelangelo* (Reynal: New York); Angela Ottino della Chiesa, *Botticelli and his*

Contemporaries (Crown: New York); Pietro Zampetti, *Jacopo Bassano* (Philip C. Dusch-
nes: New York); Ottilie G.
Boetzkes, *Salvator Rosa* (Van-
tage; New York); Decio Gio-
seffi, *Canaletto and his Con-
temporaries* (Crown: New
York); Carlo Levi, *Eternal
Italy* (Viking: New York),
with photographs by Janos
Reismann.

A THIRTEEN-MILLION-
DOLLAR bus terminal in New
York will be the first exam-
ple in America of the work of
Pier Luigi Nervi, already well-
known in Italy as an architect
and engineer. The terminal,
which is to be located at the
Manhattan side of the George
Washington Bridge, should be
a striking addition to the land-
scape. Its roof will be con-
structed of triangular sections
of pre-cast concrete which will
jut out like a series of soaring
wings above the highway ap-
proaching the bridge.

SEVERAL JOURNALS re-
cently have devoted issues to
Italian matters. The best and
most significant was the sum-
mer number of the *Sewanee
Review*, entitled "Italian Criti-
cism of American Literature:
an Anthology." We are again
reminded, if we need remind-
ing, not only that the influence
of American literature on Itali-
an in the past thirty years has
been great, but also that a
whole gifted "school" of Italian
critics and scholars concerned
with American literature has

sprung up. Appropriately, the
work of such pioneers as Emi-
lio Cecchi, Mario Praz and Ce-
sare Pavese, is well represented.
Among "creative" writers, Eu-
genio Montale and Elio Vittori-
ni show their deep, if idio-
syncratic, concern for Ameri-
can literature. Of the younger
professional and academic crit-
ics, on the whole solidly
grounded and well informed,
mention should be made at
least of Giorgio Melchiori,
Glauro Cambon, and Agostino
Lombardo, the editor of this
anthology. Professor Lombar-
do's introduction and selections
are exemplary.

Still another special issue,
this time of *The Texas Quarter-
ly*, will be devoted to Italy. Its
editor, Professor William Ar-
rowsmith, will print contribu-
tions from such authors as Cas-
sola, Gadda, Tobino, Elena
Croce, Bacchelli, Silone, Carlo
Levi, Pavese, Alvaro, and Bran-
cati. Considering the extraor-
dinary size of the issue—about
three hundred and fifty pages
of text and sixty pages of pho-
tographs—one might be tempt-
ed to call it a paperback. It
will probably appear in the
summer of 1961.

THE GROWTH of Italy's im-
portance as a maritime power
will be given new impetus by
the construction of four pas-
senger liners, two of which will
be the largest passenger ships
built in Italy since the war.
These forty-thousand-ton ves-
sels are being constructed for
the Italian Line, one in Genoa

and one in Trieste, and are designed to replace the twenty-four-thousand Vulcania and Saturnia. Each liner will accommodate over 1,800 passengers and will complete the crossing to New York in seven days. Current plans call for them to make their maiden voyages in the summer of 1963. The two other ships are being built by Lloyd Triestino for travel between Italy and Australia.

MASSIMO BONTEMPELLI, a leading figure in the futurist movement of the 1920's and a member of the Italian Academy who became a Communist senator after World War II, died last July in Rome at the age of 82. During his long career he was novelist, poet, politician, dramatist, composer, and editor. He was the founder, with Curzio Malaparte, of the review 900, and the author of many works, including fiction, poems, plays, and symphonic and chamber music.

CITY OFFICIALS of Venice, pleased with the increase in the tourist trade which has resulted from the construction of the new Marco Polo International Airport, are now considering additional ways of making their city and its surroundings more attractive to tourists. Plans are being discussed for a bridge which would link the Lido to the peninsula of Punta dei Sabbioni north of Venice, thus making it possible for tourists to visit

the famous resort area without leaving their cars. If the bridge is constructed, shipping traffic would probably be re-routed through the Porto di Malamocco south of the Lido. Meanwhile, in order to speed up passenger travel to and from the new airport, a new channel for boats will be opened alongside of the Arsenal. Finally, a passenger air terminal is to be constructed in St. Mark's Square, probably (and perhaps suitably) on the site of the former prison of the Doge's Palace.

THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT pledged continued financial aid to grand opera this year, and agreed to pay the debts contracted by the twelve major opera houses. This promise of support, however, was accompanied by a warning that the theatres must stop fighting among themselves and become more businesslike. Government authorities stated that they were tired of seeing rival productions of the same operas at the same time in every major Italian city. Plans were laid for the establishment of a central agency that would help the theatres to coordinate schedules, exchange scenery and costumes, and hire artists—and, it is apparently hoped, settled their traditional feuds.

AN ITALIAN FILM, Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, this May won the Golden Palm, top prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Four months later,

as if in grateful reciprocity, the Venice Film Festival gave its highest award, the Golden Lion, to a French movie, André Cavatte's *Le Passage du Rhin*. The Venice Festival also made a special award to Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers*, a drama about a lower-class family from southern Italy which becomes involved in the prize-fighting racket in Milan. Meanwhile the Italian Film Critics Association chose Roberto Rossellini's *General della Rovere* as the best film of 1959. Still another choice was made by the Rome Foreign Press Association, which preferred Pietro Germi's *Un Maledetto Imbroglia* (*An Ugly Mess*.)

CENSUS FIGURES recently published showed that the population of Rome is now well over two million. The official figure of 2,031,865 represents a four per cent increase during the past year.

REPORTS from all quarters seem to suggest that the Italian film industry has moved into a new period of prosperity. And, what is more, not only the quantity of film production, but also its quality, has risen.

Box office figures for 1959, recently made public by the Society of Authors and Editors, revealed that the Italian public bought about eighteen million more movie tickets than in the previous year, and that Italian films accounted for a

larger part of the market than ever before. During the first six months of 1960 one hundred and nine Italian films were released, making it probable that by the end of the year production will exceed the 1954 record of 201 films.

Among the many movies made in Italy recently are two based on novels by Alberto Moravia: *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*), directed by Vittorio De Sica, and starring Sophia Loren and Raf Vallone, which was filmed south of Rome in the Ciociaria region; and *Risate di Gioia* (*Joy of Laughter*) directed by Mario Monicelli, with Anna Magnani and Ben Gazzara. Michelangelo Antonioni, whose *L'Avventura* won a special prize at Cannes, chose Milan as a setting for his new film, *La Notte* (*The Night*), while Roberto Rossellini went to Sicily to make *Viva l'Italia*, which deals with the campaigns of Garibaldi.

Another film on the subject of the Risorgimento, based on *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*), the novel by Giuseppe di Lampedusa which has become a best-seller in the United States as well as Italy, will be produced next summer by an Italian-American company. Titanus Films of Rome will make the picture on location in Sicily with American and Italian stars and a budget of "more than two million." The screen adaptation (in English) is now being written by Ettore Giannini.

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